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Across the Street

A FARCICAL COMEDY IN THREE ACTS

BY
RICHARD A. PURDY

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"Crossed Wires"*)

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CHARACTERS IN THE PLAY

(In the order of their appearance)

MILDRED MARTIN
OBERLY MUSGRAVE
HARRY STAPLETON
MRS. ELVIRA BAGLEY
JOE BAGLEY
CYRUS PERKINS
CALVIN ABBOTT
AGNES ELLERY
KENNETH DODGE
COL. WENTWORTH DODGE

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

- ACT I: *The Bagley Dry Goods Store. Morning, early June.*
ACT II: *Editorial room of the Glendale Observer. Afternoon in late August.*
ACT III: *The Town Hall. About 8 o'clock the same evening as Act II.*

The action of the play takes place in the town of Glendale, a town like hundreds of others throughout the United States, and like dozens scattered over New England especially, but unlike most others in that it is not progressing and appears to have come to a standstill. It is supposed to be a town of about six thousand inhabitants, where one daily newspaper is published and a trolley line has been established. It is at present governed by Three Select Men, who derive their power from the annual Town Meeting, as most of such towns do, and if it were more progressive, would probably petition the state legislature to become a small city with a mayor and council. Three of its prominent citizens are now its Select Men and have full power to issue bonds for public improvements—such as trolley lines, electric plants, draining, paving, Town Hall Building, grade and railroad crossings and all other public services incident to running a small town.

CHARACTERS IN THE PLAY

JOE BAGLEY—*Son and heir to Joseph Bagley, Senior, who established the best dry goods store in Glendale back in the nineties. One of the Crossed Wires.*

KENNETH DODGE—*A reporter, formerly on a city newspaper who has abandoned metropolitan journalism to become associate editor of the local Glendale Observer and thereby rise in his profession. The other Crossed Wire.*

OBERLY MUSGRAVE—*Owner and editor of the Glendale Observer. The president of the First National Bank, chairman of the Three Select Men who govern the town, president of the Electric Light and Power Co., owner of the trolley line and of about everything else of value in Glendale.*

CYRUS PERKINS—*The only oldtimer in town who has up-to-date ideas, and another of the Three Select Men.*

CALVIN ABBOTT—*Friend of Musgrave and the third Select Man.*

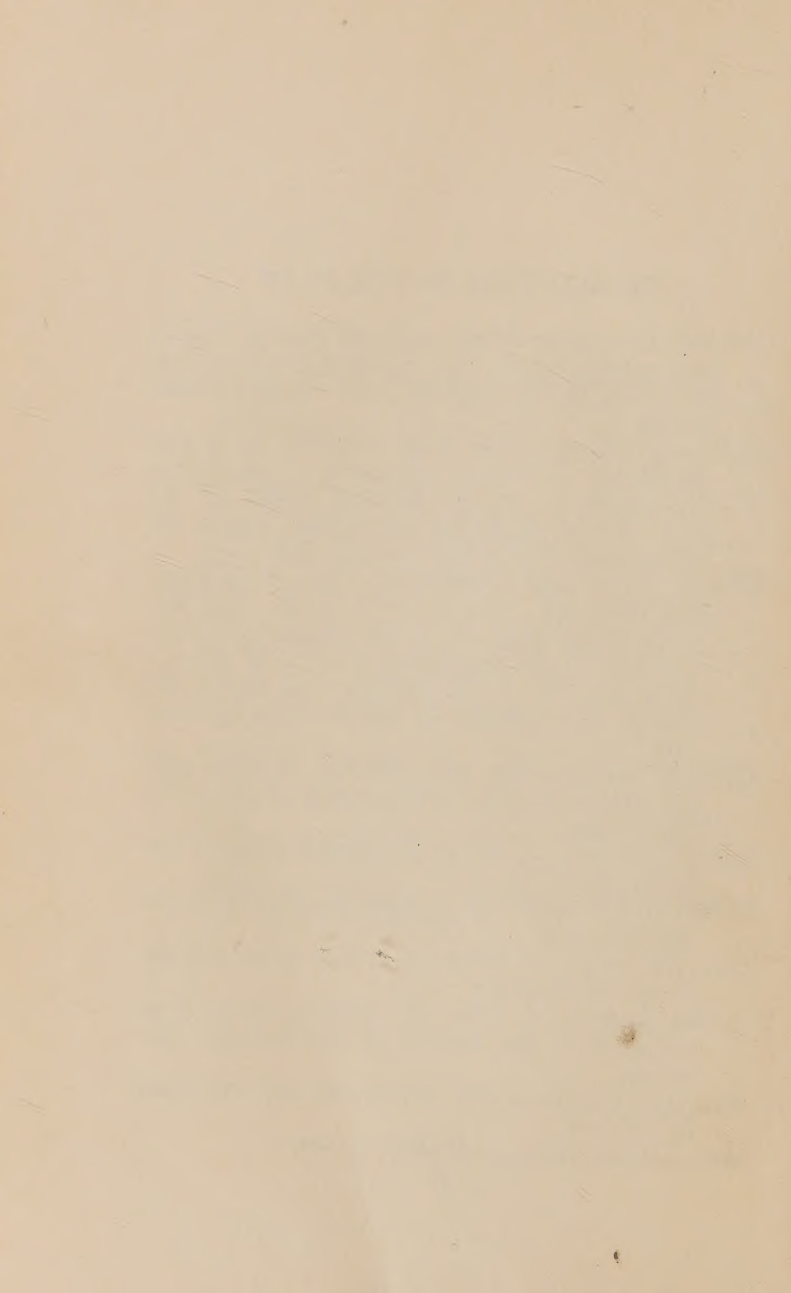
HARRY STAPLETON—*An engineer building the bridge over the river.*

COL. WENTWORTH DODGE—*A retired editor and the father of Kenneth.*

AGNES ELLERY—*A native of Glendale and the stenographer in the employ of the Glendale Observer.*

MILDRED MARTIN—*Joe's sweetheart, and employed in the store.*

MRS. ELVIRA BAGLEY—*Mother of Joe.*



Across the Street

ACT I

SCENE: *An old-fashioned primitive interior of a country dry goods store of fair size.*

It is a bright morning in early June. The store faces the street which forms a side of the square showing the section to be the center of Main Street.

At the back in the center is a double doorway with both doors open and through which you pass to and from the main street and the square. There are rather broad windows each side of the doorway, on both of which is painted to read from outside, "Joseph Bagley—Dry Goods." On the left side of the store, near the front, is a door supposed to lead to rooms upstairs. Counters run parallel with the side walls and in front of them are a few movable stools. A small counter c., with goods on it for sale. The walls back of the counters have shelves containing boxes of merchandise and rolls of gingham, silks, and other articles appropriate to such a Dry Goods Store. Back of the counter on the right side is a small ladder that opens in the inverted "V" shape, to be used in reaching the higher shelves. There is a telephone on the counter on the left side, near the front window. Electric light fixtures about—not practical. The awning outside, which is partly down, is faded and rent. The whole place has a very dingy

and run-down appearance and bears evidence of not being up-to-date. A few palm leaf fans are on the counters. Across the square or street through the door and windows of the dry goods store can be seen a dilapidated block of buildings on the corner of which and directly opposite the dry goods store, occupying the ground floor, is the office of the Glendale Observer, showing one window and a door on the main floor and two windows to each floor above if they can be seen. This building, too, is very dingy looking. The sign "Glendale Observer" must be clear enough to be read, but looks faded and everywhere is the appearance about the square of a town that is not progressing. A trolley line may be seen coming through the street from Glendale Corner of the Observer and passing to the left of the Dry Goods store. Very occasionally a man or woman passes leisurely by. The whistle of a locomotive can be heard from the right side now and then, as if the station were not far away.

AT RISE: *Discovered, MILDRED MARTIN. MILDRED is about 24, smart looking and magnetic. She is of the sweet and wholesome type with a plentiful share of persuasive feminine charm. She is well-bred, refined and educated. She is the best kind of product of such a town.*

She is arranging the stools in good order in front of the right counter. She then passes back of the counter, takes out a box or two as if looking over the stock and while her back is toward the counter, OBERLY MUSGRAVE passes the window, coming from right, and enters. He is mopping his face and neck with a large white handkerchief.

OBERLY MUSGRAVE is about 60 or so, somewhat military and severe in manner. He carries

a cane. Wears a large hat. He is excitable and gruff. He has the tyranny of manner that comes to small natures who are used to ordering people about. He is irritated by opposition, very positive and austere. He is important in his own estimation, domineering and arrogant. The typical small town tyrant known throughout the country in varying degrees. In the city he would be a Captain of Industry or a political boss; if his moustache were turned up at the ends and he wore a uniform, he would be a regular Kaiser in his limited field.

MUSGRAVE. (*Who has only entered a step or two*)
Morning, Mildred!

MILDRED. (*Curtly*) Good morning, Mr. Musgrave.

MUSGRAVE. Hot, isn't it?

MILDRED. (*Still curtly, and coming out c. to face him*) Yes!

MUSGRAVE. (*As if about to say something severe—then changing his mind*) Morning!

(*He goes out and, looking back angrily, passes off left. HARRY STAPLETON passes the window coming from R. He is about 30, good looking and dressed as a city engineer, who is at work in the country—without a coat, in an attractive shirt, wears leggings, a neat tie and jaunty hat of the Fedora type. He adjusts his collar, tie, and cuffs from time to time. Is plainly vain and conscious of his good looks. He approaches from R., somewhat cautiously, as if avoiding MUSGRAVE, and half enters the doorway of the store, then stands looking after MUSGRAVE.*)

STAPLETON. Good morning!

MILDRED. Good morning, Mr. Stapleton.

STAPLETON. I'm glad old Musgrave didn't see me. He's worrying the life out of me about some steel for the bridge. *(He stands looking after Musgrave.)* Look! He bumped into the minister on the other corner and the minister just bowed and stepped out of his way. *(Miner, slaps his knee, laughs and sits on edge of seat c., facing Mildred R.)*

MILDRED. That's what we all have to do—just bow and step out of the way.

STAPLETON. *(Drawing himself up boastingly.)* Oh, we don't all have to do that you know! *(Pulls down cuffs and adjusts tie.)*

MILDRED. You just kept out of his way so he wouldn't bump you. *(She goes behind the counter right.)* What's the trouble with the steel?

STAPLETON. There are three car loads of it down on a siding two miles away and I can't get the railroad to land it here. We'll need it in a day or so.

MILDRED. Get Musgrave to bump into the railroad agent with a little money and the cars will begin to move!

STAPLETON. I take some pride in getting results myself without his aid. I'm the engineer building the bridge, you know.

MILDRED. Yes! But he's president of the bridge company. He thinks he's building it.

STAPLETON. *(Laughs.)* Yes! He does! You ought to hear me talk to him. I tell him what's what!

MILDRED. You do?

STAPLETON. You bet I do!

MILDRED. I'd like to hear someone call him down—just once. I'll do it myself sometime.

STAPLETON. Oh, he's got you country people all scared to death. You know that won't go with a city man like me! Have you seen the new spar?

MILDRED. Yes, we can see it plainly from our house up the street.

STAPLETON. Come down sometime. I'll take you out on it—tonight if you can. It will be moonlight. I want you to take an interest in the bridge and the engineer, too. *(Goes to counter.)*

MILDRED. Most all the girls in town seem to be interested in one or the other. Probably the—engineer!

STAPLETON. But I may not be so interested in *them* you know. I don't invite everyone.

MILDRED. No—not everyone!

STAPLETON. Joe needn't know anything about it.

MILDRED. Oh, yes, he would. I'd tell him if I went.

STAPLETON. *(With contempt)* He's so busy reforming the town, he wouldn't care.

MILDRED. I'm very proud of Joe and what he's trying to do, even if he can't succeed.

(They are at the end of the counter R. MUSGRAVE enters from L. and stands in doorway looking at them. STAPLETON slowly reaches for MILDRED'S hand and draws back as MUSGRAVE speaks.)

MUSGRAVE. Is this the way you get those cars moved? *(His manner becomes very severe.)* Stapleton, I want that steel here this afternoon. Here—you understand? You get results, *or I will*. And if I take a hand, the railroad will drop someone from its payroll.

STAPLETON. *(In quite evident awe of MUSGRAVE)* Yes, sir, I'm going to see the agent now. *(He starts.)*

MUSGRAVE. Wait a minute. I'll write an order for them. *(He takes out a paper and turns to R. counter to write it.)* Where's Joe? Out, as usual?

MILDRED. He's out—yes, but he's *usually* here.

MUSGRAVE. Well, I want to see him.

MILDRED. I'll try to find him. I don't think he's far away.

MUSGRAVE. Probably not. I suppose he's on some corner making a speech about the Gas Plant, or my new bridge. I gave him a piece of my mind once this morning. Get him!

MILDRED. (*Timidly*) Yes—I will! (*She goes out and passes L., looking back hatefully at MUSGRAVE.*)

MUSGRAVE. There's the order. Get busy! And look here, young man—your attitude doesn't suit me lately. (*He takes out some papers.*) I want these new specifications approved!

STAPLETON. (*Timidly*) I can't sign them. They're not up to requirements. The bridge wouldn't be safe.

MUSGRAVE. I'll assume the responsibility. We'll save sixty thousand dollars. You'll get part of it. There's a check in advance for a thousand. You'd better approve this contract—*now!*

STAPLETON. (*Hesitates—takes the check. Looks at it and crosses R.*) Who are these contractors?

MUSGRAVE. (*L.*) They're my friends. It's all right. Sign right there.

STAPLETON. (*Signs and takes check*) You'll protect me in this? The State Bridge Commissioners have to pass these!

(*MILDRED re-enters from L. Stands listening.*)

MUSGRAVE. They've been taken care of. I had them appointed! Go along now and do as I told you!

(*STAPLETON looks embarrassed, tries to appear heroic before MILDRED, but mildly obeys.*)

STAPLETON. Yes, sir! (*Exchanges glances with MILDRED and exits, going R.*)

MUSGRAVE. (*Crosses to R.*) Well, where's Joe?

MILDRED. I couldn't find him. (*Goes behind counter R.*)

MUSGRAVE. He hates work. His mother and you have to do most of it. Joe's just lazy.

(MRS. ELVIRA BAGLEY enters at doorway L., from upstairs, and stands listening. She is rather smart and good looking for a woman of about 50. She bears real love in her heart for the whole world and cannot understand its absence in others. She is a true Christian. Not old-fashioned. Plainly but very neatly dressed. She has a sweet motherly air and is of the refined New England type.)

MILDRED. (*With rapture*) Oh, no, he isn't. No one with Joe's mind could be called lazy.

MUSGRAVE. (*Seeing MRS. BAGLEY*) 'Morning, Elvira.

MRS. ELVIRA. Good-morning, Oberly.

MUSGRAVE. You two have spoiled Joe. There's no worse start for a young man than a mother and a sweetheart who can't see his faults. (*Takes out a bit of paper from his pocket.*) I'm making a list of things I may need in Montana.

MRS. BAGLEY. (*Coming to c.*) When do you leave?

MUSGRAVE. I don't know. As soon as I can arrange things here. (*Swelling up with pride*) You know I have a good many interests in this town.

MRS. BAGLEY. Yes, you certainly have. Did you want something this morning?

MUSGRAVE. (*Consulting list*) Yes. A couple of heavy scarves and some nice woolen gloves.

MRS. BAGLEY. I don't see how you thought of such things on a hot June morning. It will be summer out in Montana, too, won't it? (*Takes palm leaf from counter R.*)

MUSGRAVE. I'm going back in the mountains. It's cold up there even in summer.

(MILDRED *has been looking meanwhile in boxes back of counter on shelves, R.*)

MILDRED. I don't believe we have any scarves or woolen gloves—now.

MUSGRAVE. Of course not—I didn't expect you had, but I wanted to give you time to get them in.

MRS. BAGLEY. Yes, we will.

MUSGRAVE. When your husband was alive, this store wasn't run down this way.

MRS. BAGLEY. (*Reverentially*) He was a splendid business man.

MUSGRAVE. Your saintly son, Joe, that you think is such a wonder, doesn't resemble him very much.

MRS. BAGLEY. (*Stamping her foot*) Let Joe alone—please! His talent doesn't run that way.

MUSGRAVE. I should say not. (*He turns to MILDRED.*) Mildred, I don't think Joe will make much of a husband for you. You're wasting your time in this run-down store. A smart girl like you could do better.

MILDRED. (*Coming to centre and putting arms around MRS. BAGLEY*) I wouldn't leave Mrs. Bagley.

MUSGRAVE. Joe—you mean. All right. It's a wonder his father doesn't turn over in his grave. (*Crosses to L.*)

MRS. BAGLEY. You don't understand Joe. That's all. How could you? He's better educated than most of us. (*Goes behind counter R.*)

MUSGRAVE. Oh, yes, college has spoiled many a country boy.

MRS. BAGLEY. College or no college, Daniel Webster, Henry Clay, Abraham Lincoln and lots of others, developed from country boys.

MUSGRAVE. Yes . . . I was born in the country, too.

MRS. BAGLEY. Are *you* like them?

MUSGRAVE. In a way, yes.

MRS. BAGLEY. Like Lincoln, I suppose?

MUSGRAVE. Well, he wasn't a college boy. Neither am I. But do you think Joe is like one of them?
(*To counter R.*)

MRS. BAGLEY. No, I don't say that. But Joe is different from some country boys, just as they were.

MUSGRAVE. If Lincoln were here today he'd show you how to run a country store. He did it.

MRS. BAGLEY. And if Webster were here he'd dream about oratory just as Joe does.

MUSGRAVE. Did you ever hear me make a speech?

MILDRED. No, and I don't want to. (*Goes behind counter L.*)

MUSGRAVE. Mildred, that's enough. (*To Mrs. BAGLEY*) You tell Joe we don't need any young Websters here as long as I'm Editor of the Glendale Observer.

MILDRED. That's all run down like everything else in this town.

MUSGRAVE. It's what it prints that counts. It reflects my thoughts.

MILDRED. That's what's the matter with it, some people say.

MUSGRAVE. (*Looks at her. A pause.*) Oh, I have enemies. I'll take care of them some time.

MRS. BAGLEY. (*Pleadingly with him behind counter R.*) Why didn't you take Joe on as Associate Editor? That's where his talent would have shone. You *know* how he's always wanted to be on the paper.

MUSGRAVE. Oh, yes, I know he wanted to be my Associate Editor, but he won't get the chance. Joe has different ideas about running a paper from mine. I run *my* paper *my* way.

MRS. BAGLEY. Have you someone else to fill your place while you're gone?

MUSGRAVE. Yes. I have a young man coming today who suits me all right. He's the son of a rich retired editor and as smart and as bright as they make 'em. He's been on one of the *city papers*.

MRS. BAGLEY. But he's a stranger here. Joe is a native. Joe loves this town. His heart is almost broken about it all.

MUSGRAVE. He'll get over it. (*Starts for the door.*) Don't leave it to Joe to order the scarves and gloves, or you won't have them when I leave for Montana. 'Morning!

MRS. BAGLEY. (*Crosses to L.*) Good-morning. (*Waits until MUSGRAVE goes out and passes by the window going R.*) I'll tidy up a bit. (*Exit L.*)

(JOE BAGLEY passes the window coming from L. and enters, looking after MUSGRAVE. JOE is about 28. He is dressed a little carelessly but attractively. He is slender and good looking with something of the student about him. His manner is distinguished and he appears at ease, moving about confidently and gracefully. JOE is a hero-worshipper and a real hero himself in that he adores principle and justice and would work for the good of others rather than for himself, but he is indifferent to business and money-getting for its own sake. He is a dreamer and lover of his fellow men.)

JOE. Hello, Mildred! Old Musgrave here again? (*Puts hat behind counter right and busies himself.*)

MILDRED. Yes. He wanted you.

JOE. Well, I'll be here when he comes back.

MILDRED. Where have you been?

JOE. Up in the woods.

MILDRED. Brooding?

JOE. (*Coming to c.*) I had to have it out with myself. I didn't want Mother to know how I feel about the paper and the new Associate Editor who's coming.

MILDRED. She does know. You'll have to give it up, Joe.

JOE. I guess I will.

MILDRED. Let's try another way. Stop brooding about the paper and the bridge Harry Stapleton is building.

JOE. Stapleton came in just as I left, didn't he?

MILDRED. (*Nodding*) He's worried about some steel.

JOE. Then why does he hang around here? We don't carry steel.

MILDRED. Possibly he wanted to see me.

JOE. That's just what I don't like about it.

MILDRED. A girl wants to talk of something besides Glendale.

JOE. I know! But things aren't going right here.

MILDRED. Don't make yourself responsible for the town. Let the others do that. (*Comes to c.*)

JOE. A man can't shirk his responsibility.

MILDRED. Well, I'm here.

JOE. You're just a girl. I mean a responsibility as a townsman.

MILDRED. If we ever get married, Joe, I'll show you what a responsibility really is.

JOE. I wish we could get married! But that seems impossible just yet.

MILDRED. Then I guess I'll have to marry Harry Stapleton. (*Goes to back of counter L.*)

JOE. Has he asked you? (*At counter L.*)

MILDRED. Why should he? This is leap year.

JOE. Do you mean to say you'd propose to him?

MILDRED. Why not? I just proposed to you and you turned me down flat.

JOE. Well, I believe Stapleton is a crook or he wouldn't be in with Musgrave and his crowd.

MILDRED. Now you're jealous.

JOE. You know I think the world of you.

MILDRED. I *should* know it. You're so demonstrative.

JOE. What do you want me to do?

MILDRED. Wake up—that's all. (*Goes to him c.*)

JOE. I will, Mildred. I love you and some day I'll prove it.

MILDRED. Why the delay?

JOE. I'm worried, that's all. You know how I always wanted to be Associate Editor of the Observer. I'd set my heart on it.

MILDRED. I'm sorry—but perhaps it's all for the best.

JOE. It did seem as if this were my opportunity. Musgrave has become interested in so many enterprises. He runs the bank, the trolley line, the new bridge company, the Town Meetings, the church—everything! And now he's bought this copper mine in Montana! He can't give much time to the paper. He needs help! The town needs education. There are a great many evils going on here under cover. Now he's brought in an outsider as Associate Editor and it will all go on the same old way. (*He has wandered about at R., and returns to MILDRED in front of counter c.*)

MILDRED. The way you talk, Joe, the town couldn't go on if you happened to die or something.

JOE. I'm not an egotist, but I've got ambition—any *real* man has.

MILDRED. But there is a better ambition than attending to other people's business.

JOE. What is it?

MILDRED. Try to attend to your own business and let the town alone. Have ambition to be some one by working out your own salvation. Fix up this

store! Make it pay! I'll help. Then get a *real* ambition.

JOE. What's a *real* ambition?

MILDRED. A girl to love and marry.

JOE. But the town needs reform.

MILDRED. You can't marry the town. Don't you know that love and reform don't mix?

JOE. I suppose you want me to be a cave-man. Treat 'em rough—beat 'em up?

MILDRED. Oh, Joe, could you?

JOE. Give me time. You bet I could. I will *now*. Come here! Quick! Kiss me—— (*Seizes her.*) Kiss me, I say! (*Kisses her fiercely, swings her around, pushes her on the run toward door L.*)

MILDRED. (*Catching her breath*) That's what I call ambition! (*Exits through door at L.*)

(*JOE stands thinking. He goes back and looks longingly at the office of the Observer. Goes to counter L. with a sigh and ponders. The telephone rings.*)

JOE. Hello! (*Pause.*) We haven't any. (*Pause.*) Yes! Everything is run down in this town. Good-bye. (*Hangs up receiver.*)

(*CYRUS PERKINS and CALVIN ABBOTT approach from R. They stop outside of the window, pointing and talking loudly, and seem to be in the midst of a heated debate. They move on to the doorway still talking. PERKINS, dressed like a fairly well-to-do townsman, is milder and more convincing than ABBOTT, who is aggressive and crabbed. ABBOTT is also dressed as a townsman. Neither one is the old-fashioned, be-whiskered kind, nor in any way grotesque.*)

ABBOTT. (*Standing in doorway*) You're worrying a lot about the Gas House bonds.

PERKINS. Well, two of our Select Men don't worry much about anything concerning this town.

ABBOTT. They don't have to worry. They know how to run the town. *(They enter a few steps.)*

PERKINS. 'Taint so, I tell you and I know it.

ABBOTT. Well, you'll have a vote on it when the Select Men meet, but with me and Musgrave ag'in' you, we'll out-vote you, Cy Perkins.

PERKINS. Look here, Cal Abbott, you may out-vote me, but you can't bluff me. I ain't that kind of a citizen. And hark ye, Cal Abbott, my vote as a Select Man is for the good of the town and not for no man's pocket whoever he be!

ABBOTT. Are you makin' a dirty hint, Cy Perkins? If you be——

(They now enter R. side of center counter, shoulder to shoulder, looking fiercely into each other's faces and with grim determination. They stop in the center of the room front, as JOE speaks.)

JOE. What's the row? The Gas Plant Bonds again?

PERKINS. *(Leans on counter L.)* That 'ere is it, Joe. I was on my way here peaceful-like enough, to buy a present for Mandy, it's her birthday, when right on the corner there, Cal Abbott hitches onto me and tackles me about the Gas Plant Bonds. Now we don't harness well together—Cal and me don't. We travel better single——

ABBOTT. You said you were going to ask Joe about the bonds!

PERKINS. So I will! But I want to tend to my wife, Mandy, first. It's her birthday.

ABBOTT. You said that once. Go ahead!

JOE. What do you want for Mandy, Cy?

PERKINS. I thought perhaps a nice umbrella.

JOE. An umbrella?

ABBOTT. Why don't you buy one for yourself?

PERKINS. Why?

ABBOTT. You can shut up an umbrella!

(JOE looks bewildered as to their location, turns around once or twice in thinking where they are, taking a step or two in one direction and then another in an uncertain way, then very deliberately leans across the counter and points his finger at CAL ABBOTT.)

JOE. Those Gas Plant Bonds——

PERKINS. Don't forget the umbrella, Joe.

JOE. (*As if drawn back to an unwelcome subject and trying to locate them*) That's so, Cy! Here they are——right under the counter. (*Brings out five umbrellas from under the counter, with tags attached, and throws them rather indifferently on the counter.*)

PERKINS. Yes—a nice one. Stylish-like! She's a good wife.

JOE. How's that one? (*PERKINS takes it and grows very wrapt in examining it.*)

ABBOTT. Don't forget to ask about the bonds. (*Sits on c. counter.*)

JOE. Don't bother, Cy. I'll answer him. Twenty years ago we put up the Gas Plant and the town issued bonds to pay for it.

PERKINS. (*Seemingly only interested in the umbrella*) One hundred bonds, of a thousand dollars each. That looks nifty, don't it now?

JOE. (*Back of counter L.*) Yes! One hundred thousand dollars in bonds with interest at five per cent. In twenty years this town has paid one hundred thousand dollars in interest alone. If we pay the bonds when they are due in October, it will then have cost this town two hundred thousand dollars for a

Gas House and Plant that haven't been used for twelve years!

PERKINS. (*Slyly looking around, but still seemingly interested in the umbrella*) When the Electric Light system was put in. (*Opens the umbrella and examines it inside, as ABBOTT looks around at him. Hides behind the open umbrella, then looks over the edge*) Opens up nice—light, too! How much did you say, Joe? (*Closes the umbrella.*)

JOE. Two hundred thousand dollars! (*Goes between them about c.*)

PERKINS. (*As he examines the tag*) You're making a big reduction. This here says five dollars.

JOE. (*As he examines the tag*) That's right. Five. It's strong, too.

PERKINS. Ain't it now for such a little thing! How long will it last?

JOE. (*Going to ABBOTT*) Another twenty years——

PERKINS. Good gracious! How old is it now, Joe?

JOE. (*To ABBOTT*) Twenty years—— (*Holds his finger suspended before ABBOTT, as if framing a new thought.*)

PERKINS. It don't look it. (*Examines the umbrella.*)

JOE. That old Gas House—— (*He breaks off with ABBOTT and approaches PERKINS.*) You know it's all rust and dust inside——

PERKINS. Is it now? I didn't notice. I'll have to open it up again. (*Opens the umbrella in ABBOTT's face.*) It looks like I was buyin' a lot of rubbish, but it's worth five dollars to know the truth now and then. (*Closes the umbrella and takes out a bill which he hands to JOE.*)

ABBOTT. Give him the five—that is if you've got it.

PERKINS. I've got more'n that, and I didn't make t on the Gas House job—neither.

JOE. To extend the bonds another twenty years would be a crime!

PERKINS. I wouldn't change *this* for the hull plant! You can use this. (JOE *nods and takes the money, which he puts in the cash-drawer back of the counter on the right side, and listens to them.*) Cal says——

ABBOTT. (*Speaking at the same time*) Cy says—— Oh, shut up!

PERKINS. Shut up yourself! Joe thinks——

ABBOTT. Who cares what Joe thinks anyway? He don't have any say in runnin'—this here town!

PERKINS. It's a pity he don't! He'd make a better Select Man than others I could mention.

(ABBOTT and PERKINS *glare at each other and then come slowly together again shoulder to shoulder, in the center.*)

ABBOTT. Is that another dirty hint, Cy Perkins? There are only three Select Men. I'm one——

PERKINS. I'm another!

ABBOTT. Musgrave is the third——

PERKINS. Well? I might have meant him. I might—— (*Suppresses himself with an effort.*)

ABBOTT. Well—say it out if you want to. I ain't got my hand over your mouth.

PERKINS. You bet you ain't—and never will have, neither. I'm just wonderin' if the new bridge the town is payin' for with more bonds is goin' to be another Gas Plant fraud on the people!

ABBOTT. (*At R.*) Careful, careful, Cy, about your dirty hints. I'm interested in that bridge. Musgrave is president of the company building it.

PERKINS. (*At L.*) I know. I'd like to look it over, careful-like with an expert sometime and see

what kind of material is goin' in it. I know about the Gas House job, but we may want to *walk* over the bridge when it's finished! This town don't want to issue bonds for Gas Houses and bridges just as ornaments!

ABBOTT. I'll show it to you! (*They join now at c. with their backs to the audience.*)

PERKINS. You ain't an expert, but I'll go.

ABBOTT. This ain't the only town that issues bonds! (*They start out together R. of center, talking as they go.*)

PERKINS. I know it ain't, but it's the only town I live in.

ABBOTT. Maybe that's just what's the matter with it.

PERKINS. Because I live in it?

ABBOTT. If you don't like it, why don't you get out?

PERKINS. Well, I like the town well enough. It's the people in it I don't like—just a *few* of the people.

ABBOTT. That's just about the way *I* feel.

(*They pass by the window R., still talking. JOE looks about and then going behind counter at L. side, takes down a box or two as if studying the stock on hand.*)

AGNES ELLERY *passes the window coming from L. and enters. She is about 26, dark and pretty, smartly dressed and quite vivacious. She is the usual small town product found almost anywhere in New England, who keeps easily abreast of her city sisters through the movies. JOE turns, sees her, and comes eagerly from behind the counter to greet her. AGNES moves quickly and seems excited. She comes down R. of c. counter.*)

AGNES. What's the matter with this town today?

JOE. What's the matter with it every day?

AGNES. The same thing, I guess. It's dying.

JOE. Yes. It's caught a terrible disease—Musgraveitis!

AGNES. That's it.

JOE. Sit down and tell me what's happened to the best little writer on the Glendale Observer and the private secretary to the great and only Editor in the county. (*He makes a sweeping gesture in ridicule of MUSGRAVE.*)

AGNES. Private nothing! Now don't make fun of me, Joe. I'm not in the humor for it. Private Secretary to old Musgrave! (*She goes to JOE.*) You know what I am? I'm office-boy, stenographer, bookkeeper, writer of the Town Topics and author of all the stray cow, mad dog and fresh egg items, with a barn-fire thrown in now and then. So I'm through, I'm through!

JOE. Why, Agnes, really?

AGNES. I can't stand that old tyrant any longer. You saw Musgrave himself this morning.

JOE. I should say I did. That's what's the matter with him—seeing me. I had a talk with him. He did most of it. He wants to see me again. I'm going to do the talking then. He had one of his fits, you know.

AGNES. You bet I know. I'm in the office with him every day. Did you see him marching all around town by himself this morning?

JOE. Yes. All he needed was a brass band.

AGNES. We ought to stand on the curb, I suppose, and wave as the parade goes by. Having a fight with you and then coming to the office and roasting me! But he can't put these things over on me any longer. I've some pride. (*She sits on edge of counter c.*) And I'm going to the city on the eleven-ten to get another position. I'm all ready, too. Dressed

up and everything—except gloves. I'll have one day off, anyway. I'll go into a newspaper office and see what a real paper looks like. He'll miss me all right, if I do say it myself.

JOE. And what will Harry Stapleton do?

AGNES. Don't tease me, Joe. It isn't serious yet. Of course I like him. I'd be quite alone evenings if

Of course not for Harry.

it were. Yes. Mildred and I saw you on the bridge

JOE. Yes, last night—in the moonlight. I tell you with him last night—

these city fellows. City fellows do big things, and have

AGNES. These city fellows do little attentions girls like. time besides for the little attentions girls like.

JOE. I should say they did. *(Goes up behind counter L.)*

AGNES. Well, we won't get another Harry Stapleton in this old town very soon.

JOE. *(Comes back)* How do you know? There's another city chap coming out here to be Associate Editor. What's he like?

AGNES. *(Shrugging her shoulders)* I don't know, I've never seen him, but I'll bet he is a first class.

JOE. Why?

AGNES. *(Sitting in front of counter L.)* Can't you see the kind of a man old Musgrave would select? His father is a retired journalist—rich and all that. You should read his letters about his only son. Very flowery. Very polite. Very elegant. And can't you see the son? He begins on the paper this afternoon. That's why I asked for a day off. I want to get out, before I'm put out.

JOE. I don't think you'll be put out. You only asked for the day off, you say.

AGNES. *(Pouting)* Well, I may come back to-night—late. *(Rises and starts back.)*

(MILDRED enters at door L. and comes around counter to C.)

MILDRED. Why, Agnes, where are you going?

AGNES. To the city. Gloves, Joe. (*To MILDRED*) Eleven-ten.

(*JOE is behind the counter at left side. As AGNES approaches the left counter, KENNETH DODGE passes the window from left and enters. KENNETH is bright-witted, light in manner, and doesn't take life any too seriously because of a doting and over-indulgent father. But he is straightforward and manly. Love has not touched his young life and tragedy has played no part in it yet. He is very well dressed and neat in appearance, about 25. He enters briskly, removing his straw hat as if warm, and looks about. JOE glances at him. MILDRED crosses to the left counter and joins AGNES. They gossip about KENNETH; JOE looks over the girls' heads to KENNETH, who has moved right.*)

KENNETH. This must be Marshall Fields.

JOE. You're a salesman from Springfield, aren't you?

KENNETH. I'm from the city—I——

JOE. Well, we're pretty well stocked up here, aren't we, Mildred?

MILDRED. We need gloves and scarves, Joe.

KENNETH. I'd like to see you——

JOE. Just a minute, till I wait on this lady, if you have time? (*Speaks across the counter to AGNES and MILDRED, to draw their attention from KENNETH.*)

KENNETH. Oh—plenty. That's all there seems to be around here. I didn't know there was so much anywhere.

JOE. (*Looking about the shelves somewhat abstractedly as he half catches KENNETH's last remark*) So much what?

KENNETH. Time.

JOE. (*Turning toward KENNETH a bit miffed*) Oh, we have a few other things too—even to show city people.

KENNETH. (*Looking at the girls who turn to each other and talk*) I should say you had. Yes, indeed. Oh, take your time—take your time. I'll wait.

(KENNETH sits at right counter with great satisfaction. The girls dividing their attention between him and the street when KENNETH looks their way. JOE continues his search for the gloves.)

JOE. What kind, Agnes?

AGNES. White silk, please.

JOE. (*Trying to locate them on shelves*) White silk. Do you know, Mildred?

MILDRED. There—if we have any. Ask your mother.

JOE. (*Calling upstairs through door left*) White silk gloves, Mother. (*A pause.*) Mm—mm— (*Returns to counter.*) We're out of them. (*Looks over the girls' head to KENNETH who is absorbed with the girls.*) Do you carry gloves?

KENNETH. (*Fumbling in his pocket*) I think I have a pair somewhere—but I don't wear them much in summer.

JOE. Oh, I mean—— Never mind. Later—later!

KENNETH. Yes—don't hurry.

AGNES. Lisle-thread will do, Joe. Gray.

(JOE thinks and brings ladder from right side behind counter to left side behind counter, ascends the ladder a few steps and examines shelves. KENNETH watches him.)

JOE. Lisle-thread—gray. We have them somewhere, I know. Lisle-thread, gray. What size?

(JOE descends and takes ladder past the open door, across behind to counter right. He opens it and climbs a few rounds. The girls have crossed to stools at right counter, while KENNETH passes them, with side glances. KENNETH sits at left side and is quite enjoying himself.)

AGNES. Six.

JOE. (Comes down, taking ladder back to left side.) They are over here, after all. (The girls and KENNETH cross with JOE as before.)

KENNETH. Large coach. (Sits right.)

AGNES. I beg pardon?

KENNETH. Oh, nothing—nothing.

(KENNETH wanders to the door and looks up and down the street. He turns soon to watch JOE through the window. JOE pulls boxes out and in without finding the gloves. JOE then goes to the door left, leading upstairs and calls.)

JOE. Mother!

MURDER. (In a whisper to AGNES.) Maybe he's going back to the city on the eleven-ten.

JOE. Mother!

AGNES. Oh, I hope so.

JOE. Gloves, blue-thread—gray. Size six. (Listens.)

AGNES. You know, I like him. Find out who he is.

JOE. All right. (Goes to a box back of the left counter and easily finds the gray gloves. He presents them to AGNES on the counter.)

AGNES. These will do nicely. Charge them, Joe. (She begins putting them on, as JOE consults MURDER about the gloves.)

JOE. Anything else, Agnes?

(KENNETH wanders in, goes R., and sits.)

AGNES. Yes—now I'm here and have a little time—— I want a pair of—pair of—— (*She sees KENNETH and whispers to MILDRED. They both giggle.*) I guess I'll wait till your mother is in the store alone.

JOE. (*Plainly annoyed by their interest in KENNETH*) Why don't you go to the station?

MILDRED. Why, Joe, there's no hurry.

JOE. There's nothing to hang around here for, as I can see.

AGNES. The old train's always late anyway.

JOE. All right, all right. (*He now turns again to KENNETH, who has been looking eagerly from JOE to the girls during their talk.*) Now, sir.

KENNETH. (*Rising and crossing to left center as the girls go to right side*) I never played this before. Am I next?

JOE. Yes, but this isn't a barber-shop.

KENNETH. (*Very pleasantly*) No, I know it isn't. You don't look like a barber. You don't look like a gry-goods merchant, either. (*Sits.*)

JOE. I'm glad I don't.

KENNETH. Well—that's what you are, aren't you?

JOE. In a way. It's the only store of its kind in town.

KENNETH. I believe that all right.

JOE. I wouldn't like to tell you what I think *you* look like.

KENNETH. You have already. You think I'm a traveling salesman. I'm complimented, but you're mistaken. I'm not selling anything. I want to buy something.

JOE. Oh!

KENNETH. (*Leaning across counter, so as to speak confidentially*) I want a pair—a pair of——

(*He glances at the girls, who have wandered to the door.*) Perhaps I'd better wait till you're alone in the store.

JOE. Oh, they can't hear.

KENNETH. A pair of Boston garters.

JOE. (*Thinking*) Boston garters. . . .

KENNETH. Not so loud. Yes—you know! (*He indicates while the girls are not looking, how they go on just under the knee.*)

JOE. Oh, I know *what* they are—I don't know *where* they are. I've got a pair on.

KENNETH. Sh——!

JOE. (*Goes to door and calls as before*) Mother! Mother!

KENNETH. Does she wear them, too?

JOE. (*Returning*) I remember now. (*Takes the ladder from back of counter L., over to back of counter R.*) I remember.

KENNETH. (*He has crossed to right side, as the girls go to seats at left side*) There we go again! You know you get a lot of exercise in this store. (*Whispering and leaning across the counter*) Would you mind telling me who those two stunning girls are?

JOE. (*Has gone up the first few steps of the ladder; now turns*) May I ask first who you are?

KENNETH. That's so. You don't know.

JOE. How should I? I never saw you till you came in.

KENNETH. I forgot. I've met so many in town.

JOE. When did you arrive?

KENNETH. This morning—eager, early. I'm the new associate editor on the old Glendale Observer. (*JOE slips completely off ladder to floor in his surprise.*) Does that surprise you so?

JOE. (*Almost speechless*) No. Oh, no! I just stepped down to greet you.

KENNETH. Stepped down? (*He leans across the counter to look at the ladder.*) Stepped down?

JOE. (*Extends his hand coldly.*) Yes.

KENNETH. (*Shaking JOE's hand warmly*) You do your hospitality an injustice. You didn't just step down—you rushed down. That's what I call friendly to a stranger. Very cordial and kind. Mr. Bagley, we're going to be great friends. I feel as if I know you. You know you've kept me waiting long enough to get really acquainted with you. I've had a chance to study you and your methods. Yes, sir. We're going to be great friends. (*Glances at the girls.*) Great friends—all of us. (*They shake hands—JOE rather coldly.*)

JOE. How did you know me?

KENNETH. Your name is on the window, isn't it? Besides, I've heard of you. I've been on the go since early morning. I've met nearly everyone in town already. (*Glancing at the girls.*) Not *every-one*, of course—but *nearly* everyone.

JOE. (*Still back of R. counter*) You win! Girls, this gentleman is——

KENNETH. (*Going to c.*) Kenneth Dodge. Formerly on a city paper.

JOE. Now associate editor of the rotten old Observer.

KENNETH. Right!

JOE. Miss Mildred Martin and Miss Agnes Ellery, also on the Observer.

KENNETH. (*To girls as they rise L.*) Miss Ellery—Miss Martin. I'm out here under the advice of a devoted father to rise in the honored profession of journalism.

JOE. You'll have to use a flying-machine to rise out here. (*Stands near the ladder—thinking; KENNETH joins the girls in front of counter at left side.*) Boston—Boston—Boston—— (*Ascends nearly to top of ladder.*)





KENNETH. Oh, Philadelphia — Chicago — New Orleans—Ascaloosa—any old place.

MILDRED. Why, you've been everywhere. You're quite a traveller.

KENNETH. Not so much a traveler as Mr. Bagley is a climber. Just look at him! He ought to live in Switzerland.

(JOE takes down a box from which he gets a pair of men's garters, done in a small package. Replaces box on shelf and descends. He places the small box on the counter.)

JOE. There they are.

KENNETH. Aren't you tired? Rest yourself. *(Takes the package quickly, so that the girls do not see it. He hands a dollars bill to JOE and pockets the garters. Turns to AGNES.)* So you're on the Observer. Well, isn't that nice, now! I'm going over there shortly and you can help me a lot to get acquainted and adjusted to my new surroundings.

JOE. *(At R. side, opens and closes the cash drawer indifferently, then comes around front of R. counter)* I'm going to the drug store to get your change. *(Goes out and disappears left, looking back angrily as he sees KENNETH laugh.)*

AGNES. *(To KENNETH)* I'm not going to be there. I'm going to the city. You won't need me.

KENNETH. Oh, yes, I will. We'll need some sunshine in the office.

AGNES. *(Plainly flattered)* I may get back this afternoon, before you leave—late. But if you pull up all the shades of the side and front windows, you'll get a lot of sunshine. *(Looks at MILDRED, who goes back of counter L.)*

KENNETH. How many windows are there?

AGNES. *(Calculating)* Five.

KENNETH. From my hasty glimpse of the office a while ago, I should say it would need about fifty windows to let in any *real* sunshine.

AGNES. He'll get the run of this town all right. Eh, Mildred? If you get the rest as quickly as you got old Musgrave, you'll be a great Associate Editor. We don't get many interesting newcomers here any more.

(MILDRED, *behind counter* L., *sits and makes notes.*)

KENNETH. Perhaps they're afraid of the pace. Some speed—some speed! Why, it took me twenty minutes to make a fifty cent purchase. Now it looks as if I'd be as long getting my change. And the drug store is only next door. Who started this town on its mad career?

AGNES. (*Laughs*) That was before my time. It was just a restful little spot by the river, with a few scattered houses and a few poor settlers. My grandfather was one of them. Then it developed into quite a town, but it must have stopped growing, for I can't remember when it was any different. Why do you ask? Do you want to write something about it for the paper?

KENNETH. Yes, I'd like to. It sounds so repositful. . . . Glendale!

AGNES. Sleepy—yes.

KENNETH. But I'm going to stay. I like some things about it very, very much. Some of the people are wonderful—just wonderful! One of the descendants of your grandfather.

(HARRY STAPLETON *has passed the window right and now enters, coming down R. of C. counter. They are now in this order: STAPLETON R., KENNETH R.C., AGNES L.C., MILDRED behind counter L.*)

AGNES. Mr. Stapleton—Mr. Dodge. Mr. Stapleton is an engineer. He's building the new bridge.

KENNETH. (*Going quickly toward STAPLETON, who is a little reserved*) Yes—I know. Heilo, Stape! (*Grasps his hand warmly R.C.*)

AGNES. Oh, you are old friends. When did you meet?

KENNETH. This morning. I saw the bridge. Wonderful, Stape, wonderful!

AGNES. I'd better start, Mildred. (*Goes back L.C.*)

STAPLETON. Where are you going, Agnes? (*Crosses to her as KENNETH goes back.*)

(*Town clock starts striking eleven.*)

AGNES. To the city.

STAPLETON. Eleven-ten? (*AGNES nods.*) I'm going later. I'm sorry I didn't know.

AGNES. (*Coyly*) Would you have gone with me? (*Goes to front of counter C.*)

STAPLETON. Yes. I need a new belt, I guess. (*To MILDRED*) If you don't mind. (*Crosses to counter L.*)

(*MILDRED is behind counter L. The town clock is striking eleven, very solemnly. It is a subdued but ponderous and solemn affair, like most town clocks, and is utterly disregarded by those on the stage, because they are so used to hearing it, with the exception of KENNETH, who listens to it. KENNETH comes down to AGNES front C., after having listened at door to clock.*)

KENNETH. Who's dead? (*Comes down R. of AGNES.*)

AGNES. Dead?

KENNETH. Yes. That's a wonderful funeral march.

AGNES. (*With mock pride*) That's our Town Hall Clock, Mr. Dodge.

KENNETH. Merry little thing, isn't it? (*They chat at R.C.*)

MILDRED. A belt?

STAPLETON. Yes. (*MILDRED takes down box from shelves and puts it on the counter. She takes off cover and STAPLETON pulls out some ties.*) Why, these are ties.

MILDRED. Oh, Joe must have put them in the wrong box. (*Shows the marked end of box to STAPLETON.*) It's marked "Belts." (*Laughs, takes down another box.*) This is marked "Ties." Probably the belts are in here. (*She opens box.*) Yes.

(*AGNES and KENNETH move to door talking.*)

STAPLETON. (*Selects one*) This is all right. How much?

MILDRED. (*Looking at tag on belt*) A dollar, please. (*STAPLETON gives her a dollar bill, which she keeps in her hand.*) Thank you.

STAPLETON. Thank you. (*Goes up toward AGNES.*) Will I see you tonight, Agnes? (*Turns back to MILDRED very boastfully.*) I'll get the steel today, all right. I fixed that—without help, too.

MILDRED. I thought you would. It's wonderful! (*She crosses to cash drawer R. counter with bill.*)

STAPLETON. I just told them what I'd have and what I wouldn't have. Good-bye, everybody!

KENNETH. Good-bye, Stape! (*AGNES goes up to STAPLETON at door; they talk very intimately. KENNETH tries to get a word in, but they are too engrossed. MILDRED, behind counter R., takes down a box. KENNETH is R.*) I like that bridge. (*STAPLETON and AGNES are so engrossed they do not hear*

him, and MILDRED has her back turned. KENNETH scratches his head, looking at STAPLETON and AGNES.) I say—— (STAPLETON hurries out laughing, waving to AGNES as he exits past window going R. KENNETH comes down stage.) I believe I have some change coming from somewhere——

MILDRED. Oh, dear! Joe must have forgotten. I'll get him for you. (She goes out L., hurriedly. AGNES turns.)

KENNETH. Nice fellow, Stapleton. You know, I like the people around here—all of them. Do you have to go to the city?

AGNES. Well—I don't exactly have to, Mr.——

KENNETH. Dodge—Kenneth Dodge. Just "Kenneth" if you like. I remember yours—Agnes—Agnes——

AGNES. Not quite yet. (They are in front of c. counter.)

KENNETH. Oh, very well, very well! Only I thought right in the same town and the same office and everything——

AGNES. Mr. Dodge——

KENNETH. Quite chilly for June. Have you noticed it? (Crosses R. to counter.) I want to ask you something——

AGNES. Yes—anything you like.

KENNETH. Won't you sit down? (He puts stool out for her, then sits on counter R.) I was wondering if—— I didn't know but that—— (He seems nervous, looks out of door, then speaks with a forced pleasantness.) Are you engaged to——? (He points back R. AGNES laughs.)

AGNES. To Harry Stapleton? No, indeed.

KENNETH. (Laughs, relieved.) Splendid! (He grows serious.) I believe it's coming true.

AGNES. What's coming true?

KENNETH. Do you believe in fortune tellers?

AGNES. Fortune tellers?

KENNETH. Yes. . . . Gypsies.

AGNES. No!

(*READY Train Whistle.*)

KENNETH. (*Eagerly*) I didn't either, but I do now. Listen, last week, just for fun, I had my fortune told. *You* were in it——

AGNES. I? How could that be?

KENNETH. I don't know, but you were. I was to go on a short journey. . . . Well, here I am. I was to meet a girl with brown hair and blue eyes. There was to be a wonderful romance and——

AGNES. Where do I come in?

KENNETH. Why—blue eyes! You certainly have blue eyes. (*He looks into her face.*) Beautiful blue eyes—she said that, too. And there you are! Isn't it wonderful? And I never believed in it before.

(*MILDRED enters from L.*)

MILDRED. He'll be here soon. (*KENNETH and AGNES break. KENNETH remains R., AGNES R.C.*) Oh, I beg your pardon! Joe's left the druggist's and he's on the corner with a big crowd around him. (*Train whistle is heard.*) There's your train, Agnes.

AGNES. (*Exchanging glances with KENNETH*) I'm not going. The train's so late anyhow, I'll run up and see Mrs. Bagley for awhile. I'll see you later at the office, Mr. Dodge. (*She goes to door L. and exits. KENNETH follows eagerly. As he reaches door AGNES slams it in his face.*)

KENNETH. Out on first. (*Comes to MILDRED, end of counter L.*)

MILDRED. I'm so glad to have a moment with you before Joe comes.

KENNETH. You're engaged to Joe, aren't you? (*Sees materials at end of counter arranged so as to resemble some flag.*)

MILDRED. Not exactly . . . he's so busy.

KENNETH. What flag is that?

MILDRED. (*Sits on stool R. of counter L.*) Listen, you and Joe Bagley must be friends—real friends.

KENNETH. Of course—you and Joe and Miss Ellery and everybody. (*Sits on end of counter, L.*)

MILDRED. Except old Musgrave.

KENNETH. I don't like him anyway.

MILDRED. (*Earnestly*) Joe wanted more than anything in the world to be Associate Editor on the Observer. Joe is a wonder at reforms, civic uplift and all that. And journalism is his field. He ran his college paper——

KENNETH. Joe—Joe did? He can have my job now.

MILDRED. No—Musgrave wouldn't have that for anything. He's afraid Joe would cross his interests. He's afraid of Joe. But he believes in you. He's boasted to the whole town about your coming and what a splendid Associate Editor he's going to have.

KENNETH. (*Goes R. of C. counter.*) That's my dad's talk. He's a great booster. But—I'm afraid I can't make good. Now, if he'd only given me a store like this to run—— I've always wanted to be a business man.

MILDRED. (*Goes L. of center counter.*) Then you know how Joe feels about it. Joe's heart is in that corner—not here in this one.

KENNETH. Why does he run the paper down so then?

MILDRED. That's just talk. He's against what it is, but not what it could be made.

KENNETH. (*Very thoughtfully*) Give me a chance to talk to him. I want him to like me because—— Well, I've seen a few things already in his town. I believe Joe Bagley could build this store up.

MILDRED. His heart isn't in it, I tell you.

KENNETH. And mine isn't over there.

(JOE passes window, walking backwards from L. There is slight cheer off L. from a small group JOE has been addressing. JOE enters.)

JOE. Here's your change. (He hands fifty-cent piece to KENNETH, then goes behind counter R., closes and stands ladder back against wall in its original place.)

KENNETH. How far is it to the next town?

JOE. Are you going there?

KENNETH. No, I thought you'd been. (Puts fifty-cent change into pocket.)

MILDRED. I'll go up and help your mother. (Exit L.)

JOE. I got to talking to that crowd on the corner about the renewal of the Gas Plant Bonds.

KENNETH. That seems to be quite a popular topic among the best citizens. I'd better write that up for the paper.

JOE. That *would* fill Musgrave with joy and you'd start back to the city on the next train.

KENNETH. I get you—I get you—soft pedal?

JOE. Yes—and on everything else of real importance.

KENNETH. How about the trolley line that never runs?

JOE. Sh——!

KENNETH. That—too?

JOE. Everything. Get your bearings! Get your bearings!

KENNETH. I'm trying to—but that isn't so easy. (Confidentially across counter) There seems to be a little flirtation going on between Stapleton and that attractive Observer girl, Agnes. Have you noticed it? . . . Oh, I see a few things.

JOE. You certainly do—and you don't have to use glasses, do you?

KENNETH. Not here—in Glendale.

JOE. Well, don't see too much. You might strain your eyes, and Stapleton might dislike you.

KENNETH. I told him I liked his bridge.

JOE. *His* bridge? It's Musgrave's bridge. He's president of the company that's building it. Everything in town is Musgrave's. You're a fool to come out here.

KENNETH. Maybe not——

JOE. Yes, you are! Let me tell you something! Musgrave uses that paper to boost himself and his interests—that's ail. If you've got the ability to write, you wouldn't be allowed to cut loose.

KENNETH. *You* wanted to be associate editor? (*Sits counter R.*)

JOE. (*Behind counter R.*) Because I know the situation here. I would know how to deal with it. You don't. It would take you a year to learn. I know the points of attack. Do you know what you'll have to do? Write up the town's news—this town's news. That's a great job for a full-sized man, isn't it? It makes me laugh. (*Looks glum and disgusted.*)

KENNETH. (*Looks at JOE, then sits on stool in front of counter.*) It does?

JOE. (*Looking even more glum*) Yes, it does. It makes me laugh.

KENNETH. I didn't hear you. You're a quiet laugher.

JOE. (*Still glum*) I'm laughing *inside*.

KENNETH. Oh—that's the way you laugh, is it?

JOE. Sometimes. Especially when I think of the Glendale Observer.

KENNETH. (*Looks at JOE*) Are you still laughing?

JOE. Yes.

KENNETH. That's a great idea. Nobody can tell when you're laughing. I must practice that. Are you always laughing when you look like that?

JOE. "Associate Editor" you're going to call yourself, I believe?

KENNETH. That's in the contract—— (*As JOE shows surprise*) Now you've gone into a fit of laughter—inside, haven't you?

JOE. You bet I have!

KENNETH. You see, I can tell when you're laughing now. It's wonderful!

JOE. (*Picking up paper on counter*) You'll write a column now and then of this stuff: "The trolley line has ordered three new cars. That will reduce the schedule from fifteen minutes to ten. Dr. Grace will preach next Sunday as usual. Brown's dog bit Farmer Mead's ox Tuesday, but it was found out afterwards he wasn't mad."

KENNETH. That ox must have a good disposition.

JOE. But you won't have a chance to say a word worth while. Musgrave writes everything in his own interest and makes the people think it's theirs. I've tried to make him have a live paper for years. There are reforms needed in the county in which he takes no interest. If he were a real editor he could make himself felt in the state! When we need a patriot—he's just a cheap politician. When there's an issue—he trims. When we need a citizen—he's a hypocrite.

KENNETH. You talk like my dad. He's been an editor. He's retired now. Old-school, maybe, but sound to the core! When he wrote an editorial, there was no doubt as to what he meant. He's ambitious for me to follow in his steps. Say—I'll tell you something. He's been watching the Glendale Observer for some time——

JOE. Watching it? (*Throws one leg over and half sits on end of counter.*)

KENNETH. Yes. He's seen some of the things you've mentioned—in the county and the state. He

thinks it's my chance. "Go on a paper that isn't made yet and build it up." That's his advice. He did that and wants me to do it.

JOE. It's good advice, too. Perhaps you can. I hope so! I'm willing to help. But your father doesn't know old Musgrave.

KENNETH. Yes, he does. Secret now—— (KENNETH *sits up on end of counter, looks around to be sure they are alone.*) My dad has bought an option on the whole outfit, to run ninety days. Musgrave is in some trouble about this new mine in Montana. You didn't know that, did you?

JOE. No.

KENNETH. Crazy to get rid of the paper—too many interests—he must go out there—he's all involved and my father will buy the paper for me, if I make good by the time the option expires.

JOE. You'll make good all right.

KENNETH. (*Talking out option from pocket*) I wish I felt as sure as you do. It's a pretty stiff option. It frightens me. My dad has put up \$25,000. He's guaranteed that I'll double the circulation and double the advertisements in three months.

JOE. (*Thoughtfully*) Double them in three months?

KENNETH. Yes.

JOE. All right, I'll show you how to do it. Is that all?

KENNETH. No, but isn't that enough?

JOE. What else? (*Looks over KENNETH's shoulder at option.*)

KENNETH. Dad's guaranteed I'll get the issue out every day, settle all question of wages, and prevent a strike while Musgrave is away. If I miss a single issue of the paper my dad forfeits \$25,000.

JOE. (*Relieved*) Don't worry about that. I know this town and every man in the press room. I'm glad! By jove, you're in luck—the town's in

luck! Go to it. I'm for you! (*Rises and crosses in front of KENNETH. As he passes KENNETH, KENNETH catches his arm and pulls him back to his original position.*)

KENNETH. Now comes the sad part.

JOE. What is it?

KENNETH. I can't run a paper. I don't know how. I've no talent that way. I wish I had, just to please Dad. I've a great father and I love him.

JOE. You must be crazy! You can write, can't you?

KENNETH. It takes more than that. It's an especial talent. It looks easy to you, because you've got that talent. But I haven't. (*JOE shows great attention.*) Now, *my* talent runs in another direction. I've something of a business head, a head for organization and all that. I could make a success of this store. *You* can't!

JOE. (*Growing listless*) What would you do?

KENNETH. (*Jumps down and walks about.*) A thousand things! Where's your cashier's desk and a cash register? Where are the little wires running to it from all parts of the store—instead of going to the drug store for change? Why isn't that rent in the awning mended? Where's your modern ladder on wheels, to reach the high shelves quickly? Why aren't your boxes marked? Why don't you know something of your stock and the prices? Your heart isn't in this place—it's over there. *You belong there. I don't.* . . . I'd fit *here* though and in three months I'd need half the block—the drug store would have to move and *this* would be Bagley's emporium! (*He has wandered about, pointing out these defects. He now stops suddenly and turns on JOE.*) Do you know anything about—electricity?

JOE. Yes. Now don't tell me how to re-wire this store. I'm not interested. (*Comes to L. of KENNETH at C.*)

KENNETH. Wait a minute! You've seen two crossed wires, haven't you?

JOE. Yes——

KENNETH. You know how they sputter and break the connection and how nothing gets through till they are fixed?

JOE. Yes——

KENNETH. That's what we are, you and I, *crossed wires!* Let's straighten them out.

JOE. What!

KENNETH. Listen now. I'm going to startle you. But I'm game. I wonder if you are? Listen. (*They are close together.*) We're both failures as it is, crossed wires, I tell you. (*He illustrates with his index fingers.*) We've got to get them uncrossed, so they work. You are going to be associate editor of the Glendale Observer. I'm going to be proprietor of Bagley's Emporium. I'll be in the office on *that* corner—across the street—you'll be here on *this* corner. You can write my editorials over here. I'll run your store from over there. No one need know till we succeed and can creep from under cover. What do you say? (*Has been walking about in his enthusiasm. Pauses abruptly.*)

JOE. Let me think—let me think!

KENNETH. Yes—I've done mine—now you walk! (*Goes R.*)

JOE. (*Walks back and returns L.*) Yes, I believe it's possible!

KENNETH. Good! Walk some more and think—think hard!

JOE. (*Starts back again and returns quickly*) We've got the telephone—I can drop in your place on some excuse—you can drop in here. We'll have evenings to plan——

KENNETH. (R.C.) Good! You've got it! We must both succeed, though. You've got to build up the circulation of the Observer in ninety days——

JOE. I'll have them standing at the door yelling for the paper before it comes off the press! (*Goes back and front again at L.*)

KENNETH. Good! Then my dad will give me credit for it and buy the paper when the option is due.

JOE. And when that old tyrant goes to Montana, we'll print things that will turn the Town Meetings into riots. (*To door and back again.*)

KENNETH. You bet we will!

JOE. The Gas House bonds *cannot* be renewed. The trolley-line must be more than a part of the landscape. It must run *cars*. The new bridge has got to be built without graft. (*To door and back again.*)

KENNETH. Good stuff, Joe, but keep it for later on—run off columns of it. We mustn't overplay at the start.

JOE. No. It isn't going to be easy to put it over. He's as shrewd and as keen as they make 'em. But we'll do it. I say *yes!* (*They clasp hands.*)

KENNETH. And you've got to follow my advice about the store. That's where I shine. A merchant prince, that's what!

JOE. We'll have to take Agnes into the secret. She's in the office—

KENNETH. No one. Not on your life! Dad might hear. He might come out any time. We can make a fair trade later on. I'll transfer the paper to you after it's bought. You'll transfer the Emporium to me after it's built up. Say, Joe, I'm laughing now the way you did—inside! I've learned how. We'll laugh that way awhile and maybe later on we'll both laugh out loud like regular fellows. Are you with me? (*They shake hands again.*) Oh, I knew we were going to be great friends. Why, it seems as if I'd known you, Joe, five years. (*They lock arms and walk L., then around the store and as*

they come front and turn L. again, they meet MRS. BAGLEY, AGNES and MILDRED, who enter L.) Joe has some great ideas for building up the store!

(MRS. BAGLEY, AGNES and MILDRED come in, stand amazed.)

MRS. BAGLEY. *(Delighted)* Why, Joe!

KENNETH. Yes. Tell her, Joe.

JOE. *(Excitedly illustrating)* Yes! New awning. Cash register. A cashier's desk. Boxes on wires running all over the place. A little trolley-line of my own *that runs*. A real ladder or two—not that old thing. Editorials in boxes, all marked. *(KENNETH tries to stop him.)* No more going to the drug store for change. Stock and prices all in my head. Presses going all the time.

(KENNETH rushes toward him to suppress him, as MUSGRAVE passes window R. and stands in doorway.)

MUSGRAVE. You belong across the street.

KENNETH. I'm ready.

MUSGRAVE. You're going to show *some* people how a paper can be run. So I'll give you a pretty free hand.

KENNETH. *(Joining MUSGRAVE at door)* That's all I want.

MUSGRAVE. *(Putting his arm over KENNETH's shoulder and speaking to JOE)* I'm going to have *some* Associate Editor, I am!

JOE. You bet you are! *(Shakes hands with KENNETH.)*

(KENNETH and MUSGRAVE go out. As they pass window L., KENNETH winks to JOE.)

CURTAIN

ACT II

SCENE: *The office and editorial rooms of the Glendale Observer on the first floor above the ground floor.*

There are four large windows across the back wall looking out upon the Town Hall opposite. A trolley wire runs just about two feet above the windows. On this wire the trolley runs from time to time on cue. There is a spool and pole attached and all move with the appropriate noise as if a trolley car were passing on the street below. A small vacuum cleaner used for noise of trolley, with motor man's bell. There are also two windows L. of stage looking over to the Bagley Emporium. There are three doors: two R. side of stage, and one L. of stage. On the front door R. a sign reads from outside "Editorial Rooms." On the upper door R. sign reads "Press Room." There are three tables at back, one R.C., one C., and one L.C. There is a passage-way between tables and a space back of them. KENNETH'S desk is L. A chair on either side of it. A movable telephone on desk with long cord. Over R. is a small typewriter desk used by AGNES. Both desks face each other, running up and down stage. There is a chair opposite typewriter desk and one up C.R. of C. table which is used by MUSGRAVE at end of act.

AT RISE: *AGNES discovered at typewriter R. AGNES picks up a rose from her desk, crosses to KENNETH'S desk with it, looks at it tenderly, then kissing it, places it conspicuously on KENNETH'S*

desk. She returns to her desk and resumes typing.

STAPLETON *enters at R. front, looking about. Goes to C., then turns and sees AGNES.*

STAPLETON. Oh, there you are!

AGNES. Yes. We're upstairs now. You see we've improved things since you've been away.

STAPLETON. (*Looking about*) I see—I see. Fine idea!

AGNES. Isn't it? Kenneth has made a lot of changes.

STAPLETON. (*Looking directly at her*) So it's Kenneth now, is it? When I went away it was Mr. Dodge.

AGNES. Oh, he doesn't care for me.

STAPLETON. I don't think he does.

AGNES. Well, you don't seem to care either. You went away without even a goodbye. You were gone a week and not a word from you.

(*STAPLETON sits opposite AGNES at her desk and takes her hand, which she withdraws.*)

STAPLETON. I just got off the train and came right here. I think you're in love with this fellow Dodge and don't know it.

AGNES. A girl knows when she's in love. (*She looks dreamy.*)

STAPLETON. And how to hide it, too, maybe. Look here, Agnes, I went away just *for you*.

AGNES. For me?

STAPLETON. Yes. I want to make money and take you away from here. My little trip was worth while. I signed a contract for another bridge.

AGNES. Isn't that splendid!

STAPLETON. And you know I'm making a lot of money on this one.

AGNES. (*With growing interest*) Yes, and reputation.

STAPLETON. It's the money that counts. You know I don't like old Musgrave and Abbott and their crowd. But they're the big people when it comes to doing things out here. I'm foxy enough to stand in with them. (*Significantly*) You know there are lots of ways of making money.

AGNES. (*Trying to get his meaning*) Yes, I suppose so.

STAPLETON. I'll have my own car next winter and live in the city like a prince. We'll be married in the fall. Think it over.

AGNES. I'd like to live in the city.

STAPLETON. And so you shall! You belong there, not here. Remember the good times we used to have before he came out here? You changed after that. You've changed toward me even this week since I've been away. And I went just *for you*.

AGNES. Well, I *will* think it over.

STAPLETON. He doesn't care for you the way I do. He's probably got a sweetheart out in Kentucky where he comes from.

AGNES. Yes . . . I suppose so.

STAPLETON. I'm building a bridge for you.

AGNES. (*Her face brightens up*) Yes. Maybe you're right. I'll think it over.

STAPLETON. Don't let Dodge anchor you out here.

'Enter KENNETH back R., with cards for tables, and wearing his hat.)

KENNETH. Did the bridge fall yet?

STAPLETON. No. The bridge didn't fall! See here, I won't listen to your insults.

KENNETH. (*Comes c.*) I didn't invite you here.

STAPLETON. This is not your office. Musgrave owns this.

KENNETH. How dare you keep my stenographer from her work?

AGNES. We were only chatting.

KENNETH. (*To AGNES*) Tell me *exactly* what you were talking about.

STAPLETON. Is that necessary?

KENNETH. Did I ask you?

AGNES. Mr. Stapleton told me something of a very confidential nature.

KENNETH. Oh, he did, did he? The next time you have anything confidential to say, tell it to somebody's else's stenographer.

STAPLETON. I'm sorry I'm not welcome.

KENNETH. So am I. (*Goes L.*)

STAPLETON. Good-bye! See you tonight, Agnes.

KENNETH. (*Coming back*) Agnes has some extra work to do tonight.

AGNES. Why, Kenneth—

KENNETH. Yes. (*Goes L. again.*)

STAPLETON. (*Lovingly over her chair*) Well, tomorrow night then.

KENNETH. (*Returning*) She'll be busy every night this week.

STAPLETON. Sunday then. I'll show you the bridge, Agnes.

KENNETH. That's good. Show it to her. But don't let her stand on it.

STAPLETON. Good-bye! (*Exits door R.*)

(KENNETH and AGNES glare at each other. It is evident that they have had a quarrel—even before the scene with STAPLETON. KENNETH, after looking at her, goes to his desk L., sits, puts cards on desk, then both count four to themselves and look up at each other shyly. He picks up the rose. Smiles.)

KENNETH. Oh! This changes everything. (*He*

goes to her, putting hat on table back c.) I suppose you know you haven't spoken to me for over an hour?

AGNES. You've been downstairs most of the time, haven't you?

KENNETH. Yes, I have. I've been very busy. Has Joe been here?

AGNES. Why should *Joe* be here?

KENNETH. Well, the new press is downstairs.

AGNES. He's not interested in your new press. Joe runs the Emporium and knows how, too.

KENNETH. Yes, I suppose he *is* busy over there.

AGNES. Well, so am I over here. *(She types vigorously.)*

KENNETH. I want to open tomorrow. How do you like being upstairs?

AGNES. Oh, much better. It's less noisy and we have more room. I suppose you did need the new press.

KENNETH. I should say we did! *(Crosses L.)* We've more than doubled the circulation in less than three months and had to increase the whole staff. *I think it's great! (Sits at his desk.)*

AGNES. *(At her desk, L.)* Old Musgrave will be surprised at some of the changes.

KENNETH. Here's another surprise for him. *(Picks up signs from his desk. Then puts them back face down.)*

AGNES. *(Rising)* What's that?

KENNETH. Never mind. It's a surprise for old *Musgrave*—not for you.

AGNES. *(Nettled)* When will he be back?

KENNETH. In about a week, I think. It's a long way to Montana.

AGNES. *(Crosses and sits in front of his desk)* He's been gone almost a month, hasn't he? He left you in charge with a great deal of confidence.

KENNETH. Yes.

AGNES. But after he started for Montana—why, most of your editorials——

KENNETH. I know. They hit some of his pet interests.

AGNES. They did! The Town is quite excited about some of the things you've written. Why are you attacking everyone this way?

KENNETH. (*Assumes a solemn air*) Oh, I have to. The paper has adopted a firm policy of reform. (*He stares at her.*)

AGNES. Must that policy include attacks on Harry Stapleton and his bridge?

KENNETH. Yes! See here, Agnes, you're too much interested in Harry Stapleton. He went away for a week and you had a grouch on all the time he was gone.

AGNES. Well, he's back now. Perhaps that will remedy things.

KENNETH. Not with me. (*Sits again.*)

AGNES. Kenneth, you have no right to complain. You must know I like to be with you. But you spend all of your evenings with Joe lately.

KENNETH. I'm here all day with you.

AGNES. Oh, yes! You're fine company here all day long, dictating vicious editorials. I'm not going to be neglected this way.

KENNETH. (*Rises and goes c.*) I don't mean to neglect you, but you know I'm upset and worried lately. (*Follows her to c.*)

AGNES. Then why not come to me? Why go to Joe with your troubles?

KENNETH. Well, you see—— Well, Joe's different.

AGNES. More sympathetic, I suppose. Very well! Spend all your spare time with Joe. I'll let Harry Stapleton entertain me.

KENNETH. That doesn't seem altogether necessary.

AGNES. We used to go to the movies, once in a while.

KENNETH. I'll take you there again.

AGNES. If Joe permits, I suppose. (*Goes to her desk R. and sits.*)

KENNETH. (*Following her*) We'll change our schedule. I'll meet Joe before opening time in the morning, and we'll see "Jack Dawson's Revenge" at night.

AGNES. What do you and Joe talk about? The paper?

KENNETH. Yes—No— We talk over a lot of things, business and——

AGNES. *His* business?

KENNETH. Sometimes. (*Moves L.*)

AGNES. A lot you know about that—the dry goods business. (*Laughs.*)

KENNETH. Agnes, that's an Emporium over there. (*Points up L.*)

AGNES. (*Follows him as he goes up to window.*) Yes! My, I'd be proud of you if you could have done what Joe has!

KENNETH. (*Coughs.*) I have ideas too, you know. (*Turns to L.C.*)

AGNES. Yes, you deserve credit—in some ways. (*R.C.*)

(*READY Trolley.*)

KENNETH. Don't you like anything I do?

AGNES. Yes, you're a good organizer. Stick to that, not this editorial stuff. I like business men like Harry or Joe. Look what they've done! That's the kind of a man I am going to marry—some day.

KENNETH. (*Almost betraying his joy*) I know you will. Watch now. This is a business idea of mine. What you said is true about over there.

AGNES. About Joe's dry goods store?

(KENNETH takes a hammer and some tacks from a drawer in his desk to hammer one tack in the top at the middle of each table back. These tacks had better be in place before curtain rises and KENNETH only pretends to hammer them in at this point.)

KENNETH. Dry goods Emporium! Emporium now. Don't forget that! Why, it's an institution! Growing all the time. Another addition going up. It's nearly half a block. They come in from all the surrounding towns. In six months it will be a block! That's what I call going some. (He has finished hammering in tacks. The top of a trolley pole with the spool and rope attached pass under the wire outside from R. to L. as if a car were passing beneath, with the appropriate noise (vacuum cleaner) and electric sparks sputtering, also bell ringing on car. He rushes to follow it along, with hammer and tacks in hand.) Every car brings a load. Just look! All going to the Emporium. (He puts hammer and tacks in drawer in his desk L. and takes up three signs he brought in at beginning of the act and placed on desk. The signs have strings on tops of each. Must be in print large enough to be read by audience and are hung in following order between speeches, as each hanging creates a laugh.)

AGNES. My, but you are enthusiastic about the—Emporium. (KENNETH hangs sign on tack on L. table reading "Advertising Dept.") You are very generous to give so much credit to Joe Bagley. (KENNETH hangs sign on tack on C. table reading "Complaint Dept.")

KENNETH. Oh, I understand how an Emporium develops a town. I wish Joe great success. (Hangs sign on tack on R. table reading "Lost and Found Dept." He now steps L. to have AGNES examine them.) There! That looks like a regular news-

paper office. I must get some spindles and some pads and a few other things and we'll be ready to open up here for business tomorrow.

AGNES. (*Rises; goes up R.C.*) They look wonderful—but—what's the idea?

KENNETH. Suppose someone comes in with an advertisement——

AGNES. Well?

KENNETH. Just say, "This way please," and over you go to this table. (*Goes behind table up L.*) Take your pad, take the order and put it on the spindle so. Easy! (*Returns to c.*) Or suppose here come two—one for the "Lost and Found" department and one to advertise. Now, let's try. Here we go! Be a good fellow. (*KENNETH rushes R. to the "Lost and Found" Dept. AGNES L. to the "Advertising Dept." They pretend they are talking to customers and hold in pantomime brief conversations.*) One dollar please. Thank you! (*Pretends to put money in drawer.*)

AGNES. One-fifty. Thank you. (*She does the same. Then they return to their desks.*)

KENNETH. Business is rushing—fine!

AGNES. You didn't think of the "Complaint" department, did you?

KENNETH. I don't want to. Oh, there won't be much of that. (*Sits behind his desk L.*)

AGNES. Are you sure, after all you have written? Kenneth, I've a mind to tell you something. (*Sits opposite him at desk.*) Judge Williams said——

KENNETH. Judge Williams?

(*READY Trolley Noise and Bell.*)

AGNES. Judge Williams said "The Glendale Observer may make suggestions to the Select Men, may attack the Gas Plant and the trolley system, but it can't run my Court nor dictate to the Law."

KENNETH. Judge Williams said that?

AGNES. I think you're going too far. Judge Wil-

liams is very highly respected. You know you wrote some very strong editorials about him.

KENNETH. *I did? (She looks up.)* Oh, yes! Of course. But I write so many things. *(Trolley noise, and bell, as if going on from the Square. Trolley not seen this time. Conductor calls "Bagley's Emporium!")* KENNETH *ris*es and goes to c.) Did you hear the conductor call "Bagley's Emporium"? *That was my idea!* To help Joe.

AGNES. Remember what I said about the editorials. *(Goes to him.)* Judge Williams is the most severe Judge in this county. He never forgets and when he takes a stand, they usually go over the river.

KENNETH. Over the river? *(Worried, wants to telephone JOE. Registers this thought.)* Take this editorial downstairs, please, and have them keep the space open for one more.

AGNES. Very well. *(Takes editorial from him and starts for door R. Stops at c. table.)* You may need a big pad here and a very large spindle. *(Exits back R.)*

(KENNETH crosses to his desk after hurrying AGNES off stage.)

KENNETH. Over the river. . . . Over the river! *(Seizes phone.)* Give me Main sixty-three, please.

(MRS. BAGLEY enters from door R., goes to c., and KENNETH hangs up phone.)

MRS. BAGLEY. Kenneth, I just stole in for a moment. Mildred's waiting. She's talking to Judge Williams.

KENNETH. *(Rises from his chair, then sits again)* Judge Williams? Oh, Judge Williams! Was he on his way here?

MRS. BAGLEY. I don't know. *(Sits at KENNETH'S desk opposite him.)* He doesn't like you

since you wrote that editorial on "Swifter Justice" in the county. I heard him talking to Joe about it this morning in the store.

KENNETH. What did Joe say?

MRS. BAGLEY. Oh, *he* stood by *you*.

KENNETH. (*Vehemently*) *I should think he would!*

MRS. BAGLEY. Yes, Joe, approves of all your editorials.

KENNETH. He certainly should. He thinks that way himself.

MRS. BAGLEY. Yes, indeed, about so many things you write. He is just crazy about the way you are running the paper. Do you know I don't believe it could be managed more to his liking if Joe were running it himself!

KENNETH. No, I don't believe it could.

MRS. BAGLEY. Though I have heard Joe say you were writting some pretty strong editorials lately, *that might lead to trouble.*

KENNETH. Joe said that?

MRS. BAGLEY. Yes.

KENNETH. Well, Joe knows.

MRS. BAGLEY. Yes, Joe is a good judge of such things.

KENNETH. He's more than that.

(*READY Train Whistle.*)

MRS. BAGLEY. And your father—won't he be proud? Have you thought of that?

KENNETH. I think of *that* all the time. Say, you're doing a wonderful business over there, aren't you?

MRS. BAGLEY. Yes. I wouldn't have believed it of Joe. I'm so proud of him. It was such a good idea of his to call the store an Emporium. (KENNETH *coughs.*) Why, Joe seems to have a new idea every little while which just doubles the business. I don't know where all his ideas come from.

KENNETH. (*Coughs.*) Well, you never can tell about ideas.

MRS. BAGLEY. I'll have to run now, or Mildred and Judge Williams will be coming up after me.

KENNETH. (*Anxiously*) Did you say Judge Williams? Then run right along. (*He almost pushes her out R. front door and goes to phone as he crosses.*) Judge Williams. . . . Judge Williams . . . (*Takes down phone receiver from R. side of his desk.*) Main sixty-three, please. (*Train whistle.*) Bagley's?—Joe? Say, what kind of a guy is Judge Williams? (*Pause.*) *He is?* I want to see you about him tonight. (*Train whistle again.*) That train whistle reminded me I told you to order twenty pieces of that fine gingham. It must be on this train. (*Pause.*) Yes. I'll run a big advertisement in to-morrow's paper for you. It's all written out. (*Pause.*) No, I'm not going to read it to you. Print a sign. I say print a sign now and stick it in the window. Call it a "clearing out sale." That goes strong with the women. (*Up at the window with telephone in hand.*) Say, Joe! See that guy crossing the Square? (*Pause.*) No. The one making for your place now. (*Pause.*) Yes, with the funny hat. He's the salesman from Springfield. You took me for him once. Wait a minute! Get a hundred yards of that new silk that's selling so fast. (*Pause.*) Agnes is downstairs. Want to give me that bridge editorial now? You're hammering on that pretty hard every day. You know it gets me in bad with Agnes. (*Pause.*) Good. Wait a minute. (*He puts telephone on desk, goes behind it, takes pad and pencil, making rapid notes.*) Shoot! (*Pause.*) Title—yes. No thoroughfare, with a question-mark. Go on. (*Pause.*) Yes. (*Pause.*) Yes. (*Pause.*) Yes. (*Pause.*) Holiday in this town. Hooray! . . . No, I won't put 'hooray' in. (*Pause. Listens, puzzled.*) Wait a minute. See if I've got that

right. I'll read it back. Now listen: "It would be a solemn and shocking thing for the good people of Glendale to see September Morn"— I should say so! *(Pause.)* Oh—gone! That's different. September gone. *(Pause.)* Yes. *(Pause.)* Yes. *(Pause.)* Yes. *(Pause.)* Yep. *(Pause.)* Expert and disinterested engineers—um—um—I've got it. *(AGNES enters R. back with a paper in her hand as if to consult KENNETH, which impels him to switch the conversation with JOE.)* Yes, Mr. Jones, I understand. The advertisement is to continue a full week. Oh, wait a minute, wait a minute! *(He is greatly mixed up and annoyed between shutting JOE off and watching AGNES.)*

AGNES. *(Gets paper from her desk, comes c.)* Do you want the Jones' advertisement?

KENNETH. No. *(As AGNES turns to desk, speaks in phone.)* Yes. I didn't say "no" to you. *(As AGNES turns back he speaks to her.)* Get that editorial you just took down. *(In phone.)* Shut up a minute!

AGNES. *(Coming back to KENNETH)* Why, I didn't speak.

KENNETH. *(To AGNES)* I know you didn't. Get the editorial. *(As she starts again, he speaks in phone.)* Wait a minute. Wait a minute! *(As AGNES turns back to him, he speaks to her.)* Go on! *(She starts again. He speaks into phone.)* Not you! Not to you!

AGNES. Well, what shall I do?

KENNETH. *(To AGNES)* Go on, I tell you. *(In phone)* I didn't tell you to go on. *(Exit AGNES, back R. Takes out handkerchief and mops face; makes sure AGNES has gone. Then into phone)* Say, Joe, you know this is summer time. *(Pause.)* I suddenly shifted the conversation to Jones—that meant that someone had come in. Ah! You forgot? Now, go on! You! You! You! *(Pause.)* Yes

—from there. Quick now! (*Resumes with pad and pencil. Pause.*) Yep. (*Pause.*) Yep. (*Pause.*) Shake up, or break up? (*Pause.*) Oh—wake up. (*Pause.*) Say, I'm awake on this end. Hurry up! (*Pause.*) Yes. The end. Thank God! No! I know "thank God" doesn't go in. (*He hangs up receiver.*) Phew!

(*AGNES enters with proof sheet, and KENNETH mops his face.*)

AGNES. My, but you're warm. I don't understand. When you write editorials that upset the town, you keep cool, and yet you get so easily excited over *little* things.

KENNETH. (*Still sitting*) It's no little thing.

AGNES. Why, what's the matter with Jones?

KENNETH. That's just the signal—er— (*Rises. Realizes his mistake and becomes embarrassed.*) Um . . ha, ha!

AGNES. What signal?

(*TRAIN Whistle Is Heard.*)

KENNETH. The railroad. (*Sits again.*)

AGNES. (*Sits at his desk.*) I asked you about Jones. He's always bothering you on the telephone.

KENNETH. Oh—Jones? There was a mix-up on the wire.

AGNES. I should say there was, if you ask me.

KENNETH. I didn't ask you, but there *was* an awful mixup.

AGNES. I should say *so*! (*Hands him the editorial and goes to her desk.*)

KENNETH. That's it. Now I'll give you the other editorial and they can both go downstairs together. (*Takes the pad he has been using in talking to JOE. He paces up and down in the c. of room, in a pompous way, as if struggling for the thoughts for his editorial. He is compelled to refer to the*

pad from time to time, and after getting JOE's words, pretends to get them from the air, looking up at the ceiling in a thoughtful way at intervals.) I've made a few notes to guide me.

AGNES. As usual.

KENNETH. Yes—I can concentrate better that way.

AGNES. And write more smoothly.

KENNETH. Yes.

AGNES. And more bitterly. Especially if it's about the bridge.

(READY Noise of Trolley.)

KENNETH. That's what this one is.

AGNES. Another? Must these attacks go on?

KENNETH. They must.

AGNES. Why, Kenneth?

KENNETH. Oh, because I feel it in here so intensely. *(Indicating his chest.)*

AGNES. That doesn't seem like you.

KENNETH. I'm changing. A man changes every seven years. Let's get it over. Ready?

AGNES. Yes.

KENNETH. Title "No Thoroughfare" with a question mark. "The words 'No Thoroughfare' may greet the eyes of our towns-people at each end of the bridge now nearing completion instead of its being formally opened as scheduled in early September." *(Noise of trolley, off stage, attracts his attention. He rushes to the window. The trolley does not pass this time.)* All for the Emporium!

AGNES. *(Taking it in shorthand, but puzzled)* All for the Emporium?

KENNETH. Yes. Isn't it wonderful? *(AGNES looks up at him after starting to write.)* Don't put that in there. *(She scratches it out and waits. KENNETH resumes his pacing and continues, after consulting pad.)* "The people are eagerly awaiting this auspicious event—*(Walks.)*—which is to be cele-

brated by a holiday in this town." (AGNES *gives a sigh of relief and smiles at the prospect of the holiday, which KENNETH observes.*) You needn't look so happy about it. Maybe we won't have it. (*He consults pad.*)

AGNES. Well, I can smile about it if I want to, can't I?

KENNETH. You disturb my thoughts. I'm writing a big editorial now. (*He walks, looks up in a very important and impressive way.*) "It would be a solemn and shocking thing for the good people of Glendale to see September gone——" (*He lays great stress on gone—spelling it out.*) "G-O-N-E." (READY Trolley.)

AGNES. (*Sarcastically*) I know how to spell it, Kenneth. (KENNETH *chuckles.*) What are you laughing at? This sounds very serious to me.

KENNETH. You're right. "September gone and the bridge still unopened because graft and corruption had been discovered in its construction." (*He smiles, she looks up.*) I can smile, too, if I want to. (*Again consults pad; walks.*)

AGNES. You have a very keen sense of humor, I must say.

KENNETH. Yes! Haven't I? (*He consults pad.*) "Let us check up the work on the bridge-building company under the advice of expert and disinterested engineers and see if we have been issuing bonds"—(*Trolley seen as before crossing stage from R. to L.*) Every ten minutes——

AGNES. Issuing bonds every ten minutes——

KENNETH. (*Looks bewildered, consults pad.*) No, No! I'm talking about the trolley. They run almost on time now.

AGNES. I'm getting dreadfully mixed up. These things may hurt the paper and undo all the good you've done. You'll see! I've warned you. (*She looks very serious and KENNETH seems to feel the*

import of her remark. She leans toward him, suspending her work.) Is anyone making you write these things since Musgrave has been away?

KENNETH. Yes. . . . No. . . . Of course not. No!

AGNES. *(Pointing her finger at him)* I believe it's your father!

KENNETH. This would be mild for him. He'd stand Musgrave and his crowd on their heads.

(READY Trolley.)

AGNES. He must be a dreadful man!

KENNETH. *(With love and admiration.)* He was a real editor—he was. Where were we? *(He continues dictating editorial.)* Let's see. Oh, yes. “—issuing bonds again for another structure that will not be used, as we did for a gas plant that was abandoned twelve years ago. The towns-people may wake up some day and be appalled at what has been going on under their very eyes.” *(He starts to go on, then consults pad. Speaks abruptly)* That's all. Type this and hurry them both downstairs. *(Goes to his desk.)*

AGNES. It won't take long. *(She proceeds to type rapidly.)*

(JOE BAGLEY enters at L. door and goes to c. He speaks rapidly and seems to have something on his mind.)

JOE. Afternoon, Agnes!

AGNES. *(Looking up briefly.)* Afternoon, Joe!

KENNETH. *(Amazed)* Hello, Joe! What brings you here?

JOE. *(Sitting at KENNETH's desk.)* Something important. I thought you ought to know.

(KENNETH puts his finger to his lips to caution JOE in the presence of AGNES. A trolley heard, not

seen, and "Bagley's Emporium!"—called off stage as before, which attracts KENNETH'S attention instantly. He points to it and uses it as an excuse for conversation before AGNES.)

KENNETH. It's wonderful, Joe—wonderful business—great success! (*Rubs his hands together in delight.*)

JOE. (*His mind only on the editorials*) Yes. You bet! This paper is waking them up, isn't it?

KENNETH. The paper? I congratulate you, Joe, really, I do, on your great success *over there*. Every time the conductor bawls out "Bagley's Emporium!" everybody gets out. I'll bet there's a hundred dollars in that crowd, all going into your cash drawer.

JOE. The Emporium? Don't make me laugh! I congratulate you, Kenneth, *you, my boy*, on the great success of this paper! (*He grasps KENNETH'S hand.*)

KENNETH. No, sir—you——

JOE. You—you—— (*AGNES looks up. KENNETH motions JOE to stop talking. JOE tries to allay her interest.*) Busy on another one of his wonderful editorials?

KENNETH. (*Between his teeth*) Yes. She'll be through in a minute. Would you like to read it before it goes to press?

JOE. Why, of course. I take great interest in your editorials. Don't you know that? (*Enjoying the situation.*)

KENNETH. I think you do.

JOE. That was a splendid one you wrote about Judge Williams. I've been thinking of that!

KENNETH. (*Between his teeth*) So have I. I'll see you about that *tonight*.

JOE. You must have the goods on him. Be careful! He likes to send people over the river. You know that, I suppose?

KENNETH. (*Rising distractedly but trying to smile*) Yes, indeed. . . .

JOE. It's a nice little trip, if you don't stay too long over there. (KENNETH *gulps and swallows hard, turns to AGNES, smiling.*) Is Kenneth's latest another one about the bridge?

AGNES. (*Continuing her typing*) Yes. You might advise him, as I have, not to go too far.

JOE. (*Smiling*) No, Kenneth, don't go too far!

KENNETH. Oh, shut up!

AGNES. You see, you can't do anything with him. He's changed. He admits it himself. Here, Joe, see if you don't think this is *very* severe. (*She takes out sheet and hands it to JOE, who at once glances it over.*)

KENNETH. You're both a great comfort to me, now I'm started on my career as an *Editor*.

AGNES. You may regret it some day.

KENNETH. I do now.

AGNES. That's the first sensible thing you've said lately.

KENNETH. Thank you!

JOE. Not so bad, Kenneth—not so bad! (*Goes on reading.*)

KENNETH. Oh, I *could* do better than that—if I really tried.

AGNES. Worse, you mean.

JOE. (*Handing the editorial to AGNES, who crosses to C.*) Better than *that*? Well, you'd better try then.

AGNES. (*Addressing KENNETH.*) Both for to-day's issue, I suppose?

JOE. (*Quickly, and without thinking*) Yes, to-day's issue. You bet.

KENNETH. Yes, how did you guess it? (*Amazed at JOE's answering. Crosses to AGNES.*) Take them down and get the galley proof back as soon as you can. (*Goes to R. AGNES goes out, back R.*) Say,

Joe, you're beginning to make breaks. You shouldn't come here so often, Agnes will be suspicious.

JOE. (*Rises.*) I had to this time. I didn't know till just now the bridge articles of the last few days have set the town wild.

KENNETH. Well—that's what you wanted to do.

JOE. Yes, but it's better than I expected.

KENNETH. What?

JOE. They've called a big town meeting in the hall tonight. They want all the facts.

KENNETH. Well?

JOE. It's splendid! You'll have to address that meeting.

KENNETH. (*Incredulously*) I?

JOE. Yes.

KENNETH. You must be crazy. I—speak at a meeting? (*Goes to his desk.*)

JOE. I didn't call it, you know. The townspeople did that themselves *just now!* (*He follows him.*)

KENNETH. But it's these editorials of yours— (*Stands and points on desk.*)

JOE. Of yours! (*Pounds desk.*)

KENNETH. Of yours! (*Pounds desk.*)

JOE. The people think they're yours, and you've got to speak, I tell you. (*He sits R. of KENNETH'S desk.*)

KENNETH. Now—Joe—be serious!

JOE. You've got to, Kenneth. There's no other way. (*Is at the R. side with his back to the R. back door.*)

KENNETH. (*At the L. side of his desk*) Joe, there's a limit. I——

(*AGNES enters and stands as if to ask a question at back R. door, with the editorials in her hand.*)

JOE does not see her, but KENNETH does, and instantly shifts the conversation.)

KENNETH. Yes—Jones *is* advertising a lot.

JOE. If I only had an excuse for addressing that meeting, I'd take your place gladly——

KENNETH. I say—Jones *is* advertising a lot.

JOE. Where?

KENNETH. In the paper, of course. Hello, Agnes!

(JOE turns and sees AGNES, and looks silly at the possible exposure.)

AGNES. *(Approaches KENNETH.)* Both of these to be leaded? *(Refers to editorials.)*

KENNETH and JOE. *(Together)* Yes.

(They stare at each other. A pause. AGNES exits. KENNETH follows her to door. JOE remains L.)

KENNETH. *(Angrily)* Something's got to be done. Things can't go on this way.

JOE. Listen to reason, Kenneth.

KENNETH. You listen to me! I never spoke in public in my life. General Grant couldn't do *that*. He didn't mind a battle, but he went all to pieces if he had to speak. *You* think I'm better than General Grant? *(Goes to door and back.)*

JOE. *(At center)* Haven't you written enough of my editorials to be able to say something about them?

KENNETH. *(At R.)* No, I tell you. Not on a public platform. You can't expect me to be a successful dry goods merchant, an editor and an orator besides. You've got to call a halt. You're getting me in an awful hole.

JOE. Someone's got to vindicate the attitude of this paper. They know Musgrave is away. They naturally look to you. Why, they're talking of turning this town into a city and making you it's first Mayor. *(Slaps KENNETH on the back.)*

KENNETH. Don't do that! I'm too nervous.

(Walks up stage, then comes back again, realizing what JOE has said.) Making me what?

JOE. Mayor.

KENNETH. But I don't want to be Mayor. I just want to get out of here and out of this fix.

JOE. *We've* written some live things lately, you know.

KENNETH. We? Where do you get that "we" stuff? Are you trying to convince me that *I* wrote those articles? *You* brought this about. Drop that "we" business. *You've* got to assume the responsibility now and own up to the editorials. I'm going away. You're getting me crazy. (He rushes around as if bewildered and then back of his desk.)

JOE. (Follows him to front of his desk) Now listen, Kenneth. Listen a minute! This was *your* proposition. You wanted to know if I was game—crossed wires, and all that. You've got to go through with it.

KENNETH. I know—I know. But I didn't dream—— I'll have heart failure or something. (He takes JOE's hand and places it over his heart.) I don't know how my father stood it—an editor—in Kentucky, too.

JOE. Oh, you're all right. Be a good sport. If you don't do this your father won't buy the paper. Only a week and it will be all over.

KENNETH. (In deep despair) It will be all over before that. (Sits L. of desk L.) Look what you said in the editorial yesterday—about the defective material used and the poor riveting in the bridge——

JOE. I can prove it. (Sits R. of desk L.)

KENNETH. But *I* can't. Then that's *your* job.

JOE. I've had experts at that bridge since Stapleton has been away. The work isn't up to Stapleton's own specifications. It may mean the county jail for him, and Musgrave, too. Graft, my boy! This town has always been bled to death and no one to

make a protest. I'll get the expert's full report this afternoon. You could *read* that at the meeting, couldn't you?

KENNETH. Oh, Joe, don't! If I saw a hundred people before me, I'd drop dead on the platform.

JOE. Well, there'll be more than that. There'll be a thousand in the hall and a thousand *outside* trying to get in.

KENNETH. And one trying to get out. (*He almost collapses; goes R. and sits.*)

JOE. Now brace up, Kenneth. I'll tell you what to say. (*He goes R.*)

KENNETH. Will you be on the platform?

JOE. Of course.

KENNETH. And you'll pick me up?

JOE. You'll be all right. It's a little new to you, that's all. Come now.

KENNETH. (*Tries to rise, but sinks into chair at AGNES' desk.*) You see! Joe—if you knew how I dreaded this!

JOE. It won't be so hard.

KENNETH. Not for you—but I don't even know how to get up and begin. It's that starting off I dread so. Show me what to do.

JOE. Well, here now, I will introduce you.

KENNETH. Whom will you introduce me to?

JOE. The audience.

KENNETH. Won't they even know me?

JOE. Of course. It's just a formal introduction to—

KENNETH. Oh, yes, I know. The mourners out front. Like I was at my own funeral.

JOE. (*Hopefully*) Yes, that's it.

KENNETH. You're a cheerful guy. Have a heart!

JOE. When I will say, "Mr. Kenneth Dodge"—(*With a sweeping gesture*) Then you start. (*Thinking*) Let's see. Just rise slowly—

KENNETH. If I can rise at all!

JOE. Pull your coat together—so! Step forward. And give a little cough—so! (*Coughs.*) Just to show you feel at ease.

KENNETH. I know how much at ease I'll feel, but I'll try. (*Coughing*) How was the cough? All right?

JOE. Pretty good. You know how speakers begin.

KENNETH. Yes, but when you come to do it yourself, it's different. Let me try it now. (*Coughs.*) I know myself that was a bad one. I'll get it. Watch now. (*Takes chair and sits. Then suits the action to his words.*) Rise. . . . So. . . . Pull your coat together. . . . Step forward. . . . And cough. (*He coughs.*) All right?

JOE. Fine! Then the speech I'll write out for you to study, ending up with "We demand the bridge shall not be opened until it's made safe!" (*Makes a sweeping gesture at the finish and turns L.*)

KENNETH. (*Looking helpless*) Do I have to make motions like that?

JOE. (*Turning toward KENNETH*) Like what?

KENNETH. (*Illustrating*) Like you did.

JOE. Oh, a few.

KENNETH. I can't do it, Joe. I can't, I tell you.

JOE. You must, Kenneth. When you see the big audience out in front it will fill you with fire.

KENNETH. Not me, Joe.

JOE. Don't weaken now, Kenneth. You'll have the bridge report in your pocket. It will show how the east pier is sinking by inches. It will be worse than I thought. As you end your speech, you'll spring that report and make your big hit. That's all you have to do.

KENNETH. Is that all? Haven't you left out something? If you tried hard couldn't you think of *something* else I could do?

JOE. Kenneth, I've got it all planned out. Let me manage it.

KENNETH. I think it would be better for you and me to own up right now.

JOE. That would spoil everything. Your father wouldn't buy the paper.

KENNETH. Won't he be happy when he finds out about my editorials that *you* wrote?

JOE. Now, brace up! (KENNETH *tries*.) That's right. There you are! I'm thinking of Musgrave when he comes back next week. Now, keep it up. (*Rushes out R. front door.*)

KENNETH. (*Rushing to door*) Don't go, Joe—Joe——! There he goes making faces and talking to himself. Oh, my!

(AGNES *enters as KENNETH sits in front of his own desk L. mopping his face.*)

AGNES. Here's the galley proof . . . Why, what's the matter?

KENNETH. (*Too weak to answer; motions her to put it on his desk.*) It's so warm today. Oh! the heat! You don't seem to feel the heat at all, do you?

AGNES. Yes, but gracious, not like that. Shall I fan you?

KENNETH. Never mind. I'll be fanned later.

(AGNES *goes to her desk and types. KENNETH'S mind seems to centre on his speech. He pulls his coat together, glancing at AGNES to see that she doesn't notice, then he coughs. AGNES looks up. He coughs again. AGNES again looks up.*)

AGNES. Have you a cold, Kenneth?

KENNETH. No. Just a little frog in my throat. (*He coughs again.*) It feels like an alligator.

AGNES. Why, that's too bad.

KENNETH. Oh, it's nothing, nothing.





AGNES. *Nothing*, and it feels like an alligator?

KENNETH. I think I'll go out and take a little walk. (*Starts for the door.*)

AGNES. Yes, on the new bridge.

KENNETH. Yes! You're right. That will be a fine place to walk!

(*Exits in anger L. with hat on which he takes from back table. STAPLETON enters hurriedly R. door.*)

STAPLETON. Where's that man Dodge?

AGNES. He's gone out. Why?

STAPLETON. I've just read those bridge editorials of his and I'm here to make him retract them.

AGNES. You can't do it. I've tried.

STAPLETON. Well, *I'll* do it. I'll settle with him and find out where you stand, too.

AGNES. (*Rising*) Don't you know?

STAPLETON. Did you try to prevent his writing these things? For me? (*He approaches her at R.*)

AGNES. Yes. Joe did, too. He told Kenneth not to go too far.

STAPLETON. Joe's a fine boy. I like him. Joe's got sense. He knows how to run a store. Look there! (*Leads her L. to window.*) A thousand women trying to get in the Emporium!

AGNES. Why, what's the matter?

STAPLETON. Joe's got a sign in the window—"Clearing out Sale."

AGNES. If Kenneth only had *his* sense, instead of writing these sensational things. (*She picks up the galley proof from KENNETH'S desk.*)

STAPLETON. What's that? (*He takes it from her and reads.*)

AGNES. The galley-proof of another bridge editorial coming out today. Worse than all the rest!

STAPLETON. (*Reading on hurriedly*) Why, this

is unfair! Not open the bridge in September——? It's an outrage! I'll take this.

AGNES. No! Harry, you mustn't do that.

STAPLETON. (*Putting it in his pocket*) I just want to run it over carefully and think what to do.

AGNES. I'll be blamed. Put it back!

STAPLETON. I won't use it. It will be out in an hour anyway, won't it?

AGNES. Yes!

STAPLETON. What harm will it do then?

AGNES. I suppose it's all right, but—— (*She looks bewildered as to how to act.*)

STAPLETON. You believe in fair play?

AGNES. Yes! Yes!

STAPLETON. (*Tenderly*) Do this for me then. For me, Agnes. (*She does not resist.*) Good! You'd better be on the safe side. There's going to be a row in this town. Old Musgrave is expected back today.

AGNES. Today?

STAPLETON. Yes. There's some talk already about a tar and feathering party on the hill in the woods tonight for young Mr. Dodge.

AGNES. How awful!

STAPLETON. It's just what he deserves! (*He starts R.*)

AGNES. Oh, dear! I've warned him, but. . . . Don't show that to anyone!

STAPLETON. Of course not. I'll be responsible. (*Goes out very excited, at R. front.*)

(*AGNES goes to her desk and sits in quite a nervous condition. MILDRED enters at L. and sits opposite AGNES at her desk.*)

MILDRED. Why, Agnes! What's the matter?

AGNES. I'm just nervous I guess.

MILDRED. Oh, that's nothing. The whole town's

nervous. Kenneth seemed terribly upset, too, as he started toward the bridge.

AGNES. The bridge!

MILDRED. Yes. Just as he left me he said, "Agnes doesn't care!" with such a look on his face. I thought you ought to know.

AGNES. Do you suppose he'd jump off the bridge?

MILDRED. Oh, no! He wouldn't do that. He was just worried about something. I left word at the store for Joe to come over here immediately.

AGNES. I know what Kenneth is worried about. He isn't playing fair with us.

MILDRED. What?

AGNES. Mildred, this is a secret. It's just a suspicion, but I'm sure of it now that I put one thing and another together.

MILDRED. Agnes!

AGNES. There have been a lot of strange things going on in this office today. Jones, the garage man, who advertises so much, has had some queer talks with Kenneth over the phone and Kenneth is always excited afterwards.

MILDRED. Jones has an awful temper.

AGNES. I believe Jones is writing these terrible editorials and Kenneth is deceiving us. They're not like Kenneth at all.

MILDRED. Not a bit, Agnes. I'll bet Joe knows something about this, because Joe talks to Kenneth over the phone from the store sometimes about Jones. *(She goes c. and looks over L.)*

AGNES. *(Follows her to c.)* You see? You can't fool me. I knew it! I wish Joe would hurry.

MILDRED. How did you come to think of it?

AGNES. Just a woman's intuition. You can *always* trust that.

MILDRED. Every time!

AGNES. It takes girls to manage things. We'll see!

(JOE enters in great haste L. with a poster in his hand, which he puts on KENNETH'S desk.)

JOE. Is the place afire? Where's Kenneth? What's the matter?

MILDRED. (*Mysteriously*) We've made a discovery, Joe.

JOE. A discovery?

AGNES. Now don't get excited. We're both perfectly cool, eh, Mildred? (MILDRED *nods*. Both are trembling with excitement. A pause.) Joe, we've found out that Kenneth isn't writing these editorials. (*Folds her arms.*)

JOE. (*Greatly concerned*) You—found—that—out?

AGNES. Yes. (*She looks at MILDRED and both nod as JOE, between them at c., looks from one to the other.*)

JOE. (*Angrily*) Did Kenneth tell you that?

AGNES. No.

JOE. How do you know then?

AGNES. Did you ever hear the name *Jones*?

JOE. (*Pauses; nettled*) Jones? Why, yes. Everybody has heard that name.

AGNES. Well?

JOE. Well?

AGNES. Did it ever occur to you that Jones was writing these dreadful articles?

JOE. No, I must say I never thought of that.

MILDRED. Well, we think Jones is secretly writing these things and not Kenneth at all.

JOE. Do you mean Jones, the garage man? (*He looks from one to the other and they both nod knowingly.*) How did you discover this?

AGNES. It just flashed through my mind, like that. (*She snaps her fingers.*) I know Jones hates Musgrave and wants to be a Selectman and Kenneth let him use the paper. There you are!

JOE. Oh, I see. You just *guessed* this? It's wonderful!

AGNES. Just a woman's sixth sense, that's all.

JOE. I'm glad you haven't a seventh.

AGNES. Now, what are we going to do about it?

JOE. Let's see. . . . You haven't told anyone else?

MILDRED. Only me. And I saw right away it was true and that *you* ought to know who's writing these things.

JOE. Yes, I *ought* to know! And you saw right away it was true?

AGNES. Of course. After I explained it to her.

JOE. Now don't say a word about this to anyone. It may prove very important.

AGNES. Not a word!

MILDRED. I thought so!

(*READY Cheers.*)

JOE. (*Very emphatically*) Not a word till after the meeting. Let me handle the whole thing. I want to hang this poster here. It will give Kenneth inspiration. (*He hangs the poster at c. table which announces the Town Hall meeting in large letters: "Town Hall Meeting Tonight. Kenneth Dodge to speak." They each examine it.*)

AGNES. (*Very much surprised*) Is Kenneth going to address the town meeting?

JOE. Is he? He's going to be the star tonight.

AGNES. He *is*?

JOE. Yes. He's got to explain these editorials you found out Jones is writing.

AGNES. That's why you don't want us to speak of it. It's to be a surprise.

JOE. You bet. A great surprise! Come, Mildred! (*Exit L. in haste. KENNETH enters at R. front door. Cheers heard out back. AGNES crosses to L.*)

KENNETH. (*At center*) Agnes, where's Joe? Have you seen Musgrave? Has Cal Abbott been

goes back of her desk R. Drops her head as if very much ashamed and sits in chair of desk. KENNETH realizes for the first time it was she who gave STAPLETON the galley-proof and is very much hurt.) You, Agnes? (*A long pause.*) You gave that galley-proof to him? I can't believe it! To use against me?

AGNES. No. It was coming out in an hour. He told me—— (*She breaks off and goes to KENNETH.*) Did you say he was reading it to his bridge workers? (*She looks out of window.*)

KENNETH. Yes. It's all right. I understand now. That's the man you love. . . . And I cared so much.

AGNES. (*Goes to him c.*) You really love me?

KENNETH. Haven't you seen? Can't you tell? There's never been anybody else. Just you, Agnes, just you! But I might have known——

AGNES. Listen, Kenneth——

KENNETH. No. It doesn't matter now. I'll take care of the galley-proofs after this—myself. (*Exits back R.*)

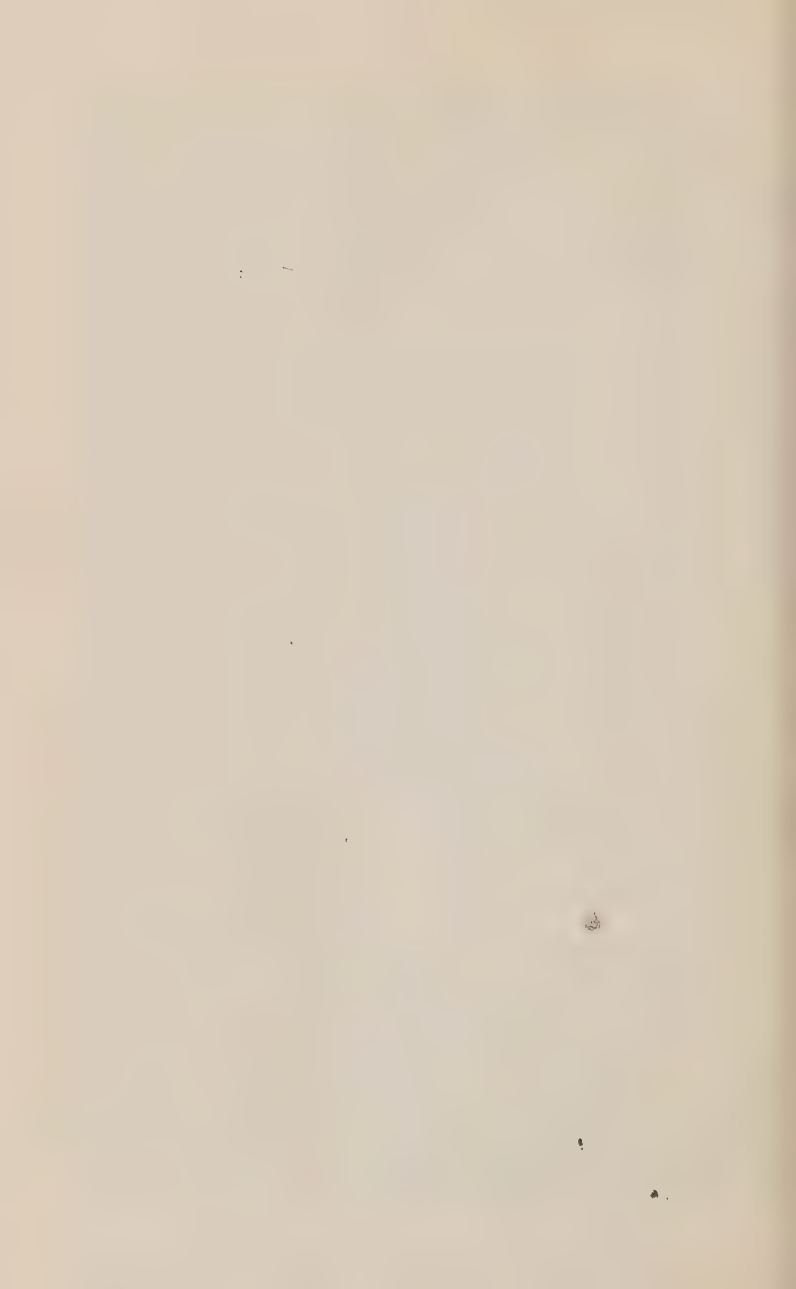
(AGNES goes to her desk, bows her head and sobs.

COL. WENTWORTH DODGE enters at R. front door. COL. DODGE is a fine looking man of about sixty, well dressed and prosperous in appearance. He wears modern up-to-date clothes, except for a Stetson hat of the Western type. He carries a suitcase which he places on the floor, takes off his hat and holds it in his hand.)

COL. DODGE. Is this the new office of the Observer—the Glendale Observer?

AGNES. Yes.

COL. DODGE. Well, ah'm Colonel Dodge, Col. Wentworth Dodge of Kaintucky, and the proud father of your Associate Editor, Kenneth Dodge.



AGNES. Oh, my gracious!

COL. DODGE. You are surprised, ah take it?

AGNES. Yes, I am.

COL. DODGE. You see—eh?—Miss——

AGNES. Ellery.

COL. DODGE. Well, now, ah certainly am proud to meet you. (*He shakes her hand.*) You see ah've been watching the progress of this paper from a distance. It has been sent to me regularly by mah agent. Ah have noted of late it has been making *some* stir.

AGNES. It certainly has!

(KENNETH enters at R. back door. He is greatly surprised and greets his father over and over again.)

KENNETH. Why, Dad! Why, Dad, I'm so glad to see you! I certainly am glad. I *need* you, too, Dad.

COL. DODGE. It doesn't seem so to *me*. Ah have kept in the background to give you a free hand. Ah wanted you to work out your own problems. Ah am informed of all you've done. Ah am proud of you, mah boy, proud of you! Blood will tell, blood will tell!

KENNETH. You don't understand, Dad. I——

COL. DODGE. You're just modest. Ah know what you've done.

KENNETH. Where have you been?

COL. DODGE. Never mind. Watching *you* and the sensation this paper is creating in this town and county. Ah've just heard *you* forced this big Town Meeting tonight. (*KENNETH'S knees give way and he goes to a seat at L.*) That's splendid, splendid! Why, you write like a veteran and you're only a boy, just out of college. Let me look at you, Kenneth. (*Places KENNETH at a little distance to get a look at him. KENNETH looks silly at accepting the praise.*)

But ah might have known. Mah boy, this is a day ah've been dreaming of for years—when ah could count on you to carry on the traditions of mah newspaper days. Ah'm so proud of you, ah carry your editorials right with me. Everything you've *written*.

(COL. DODGE goes to his satchel and puts it on KENNETH'S desk L. Opens it and takes out about twenty clippings. KENNETH follows him. COL. DODGE begins to look them over while KENNETH busies himself arranging satchel for his father. COL. DODGE is showing pride as he scans editorials.)

KENNETH. (*Digging under clothes, pulls out a cowhide and then an old-fashioned pistol from his father's satchel.*) Carrying concealed weapons, Dad? You'll be arrested.

AGNES. (*Rises*) Oh!

COL. DODGE. Don't be afraid, Miss. That gun hasn't been loaded for five years, but it did its duty in its day. It helped me to defend mah honor and mah paper's honor. When ah buy the Glendale Observer for you, Kenneth, ah'll make you a present of these to hang on your wall to remind you that what's right is worth fighting for. You've got the town by the ears!

KENNETH. (*Puts pistol and cowhide prominently on his desk*) They may have me that way soon.

COL. DODGE. By George, you're building the whole town up!

KENNETH. (*Looks longingly over at the Emporium.*) No, other things have helped the development, too.

COL. DODGE. What, for instance?

(*READY Trolley.*)

KENNETH. (*Goes to window and points.*) Why, why—Joe Bagley's Emporium over there.

COL. DODGE. (*Looks out of window.*) Yes, that seems to be doing well, but let Bagley take care of that. (*Returns to desk.*) Keep your mind on this paper, that's what ah'm going to buy. You've astonished me. Ah didn't know it was in you! These editorials are all so good. Ah enjoyed this little one especially.

KENNETH. (*Trying to see which one he has opened*) Which one was that?

COL. DODGE. (*With a laugh in which KENNETH attempts to join*) About the trolley.

KENNETH. Oh, about the trolley. Oh, that one! Oh, yes! (*Struggles to laugh as if he knew and strives to get a glimpse of it.*) The trolley, yes. And it's running, too.

(*Noise of trolley offstage.*)

COL. DODGE. You bet it is! But *who* brought it about?

KENNETH. Oh, I don't know.

COL. DODGE. You don't know! (*To AGNES*) He's so modest. *This* did it, sir. And so short, too. (*Reads from the clippings, half laughing*) "Trolley lines are chartered to run cars, passengers would rather be *in moving* cars than stalled ones. When cars run, passengers ride. Carfares pay dividends. We admit the trolley-poles are ornamental and the wires, with the little birds perched on them, add to the town's beauty, but we prefer a *live* wire, to a *dead* one." (*Gives a hearty laugh, in which KENNETH tries to join; even AGNES at her desk seems amused.*) You know that's funny, real funny. Ridicule is a powerful argument. It has a sting.

KENNETH. Well, someone's going to get stung around here all right.

COL. DODGE. You bet! You bet! Keep it up!

KENNETH. Keep it up? Dad, that's what I've

got to do, now I've started. (*Murmurs and cheers off stage. AGNES has been typing between intervals of listening to COL. DODGE and KENNETH and has taken out a sheet and gone back of table on her way downstairs, when a low murmur of voices, as if a small crowd were gathering, is heard coming from L. back. She pauses and looks out of one of the back windows. She then grips the window sill and gives a quick glance in the direction of KENNETH. Both COL. DODGE and KENNETH have heard it also, and they, too, pause for a tense moment.*)

AGNES. Kenneth!

KENNETH. What is it, Agnes?

AGNES. There's a crowd coming from the bridge!

(*Both COL. DODGE and KENNETH hurry to the windows at back.*)

COL. DODGE. Has anything happened?

AGNES. (*As she passes them*) Yes! Yes! (*Hurries out of R. back door.*)

KENNETH. (*Looking down*) Why, that's Stapleton and a lot of his workmen!

COL. DODGE. They're coming this way.

KENNETH. Go down, Dad, and see what it means—quick! (*The murmur is now heard nearer. COL. DODGE passes out of door right front, KENNETH pushing him out and closing door after him, standing with his back to it. The voices are now right below—a great many voices speaking at once in somewhat angry tones. A good deal of confusion seems to prevail. KENNETH peers cautiously out as the noise below increases, mixed with cries of "Down with the Observer!" "Who is Dodge?" "Where is Dodge?" "The Bridge is all right," the last of which is followed by a cheer. KENNETH hurries to the phone.*) Main—sixty-three—in a hurry! (*Pause. Noise.*) Say, Joe, you see what you've done now,

don't you? *(Pause.)* Well, if it's nothing, call 'em over to your place and tell them you wrote it.

(The commotion has quieted down and a voice is heard speaking below. It is STAPLETON.)

STAPLETON. Listen, my men——

KENNETH. Wait a minute—someone's speaking. Can you see who it is? *(Pause.)* Stapleton? Wait a minute. *(Listens.)*

STAPLETON. These attacks on the bridge must stop, or you'll lose your jobs.

(There are cries of "Yes, yes!" from below. Other cries follow: "We'll stop 'em!" "It's that young Dodge!" "Where is he?" "Where is Dodge?" "Dodge! Dodge!" The commotion dwindles to low murmurs.)

KENNETH. *(At the phone.)* Now—you hear that? They're yelling for me. You come over here and face the music. *(Pause.)* What'll I do? *(Pause.)* What? Speak from the window? *(Pause.)* Why, that fellow with the red shirt has a big hammer in his hand! *(Pause.)* All right, I'll talk to them if it kills me! *(Pause.)* I think it will. *(The commotion breaks out again and then subsides, he hangs up the telephone receiver. Picks up the rose on his desk a moment and kisses it, replacing it on his desk. He goes quickly to back window and, gathering his courage, looks out; then boldly assumes a jaunty air. Noise. Addresses the crowd below.)* Hello—boys! *(Crash of glass. A jeer from below. He dodges as if something had been thrown.)* Stop that, you! I saw you. You might have hit me. *(He looks about and then leans far out and looks up at the side of the building.)* You broke a pane of glass upstairs. I can't talk to all of you—it hurts my throat.

(*A jeer from below.*) I'll talk to Stapleton. Let him come up! You go back and go to work. Go past the dry goods Emporium! (*More commotion below.*)

STAPLETON. Yes. I'll deal with him. Stay where you are. I may need you.

(*COL. DODGE enters at R. front quickly.*)

COL. DODGE. Ah thought this would come. That's why ah'm here. It's just fine, Kenneth, fine.

KENNETH. Fine?

COL. DODGE. Wonderful! You've started something new.

KENNETH. It certainly looks that way.

COL. DODGE. Now listen. Keep cool! We've got to fight. Musgrave will stop the issue of the paper tonight. Ah don't mind losing the twenty-five thousand dollars, but I don't want them to beat mah boy.

KENNETH. (*L. of center*) So that's their plan? And we've doubled the circulation and increased the advertising a hundred per cent!

COL. DODGE. (*At R.*) We'll beat them yet, but don't take back a word *you've written* about the bridge.

KENNETH. Not a word I've *written*—no, sir!

COL. DODGE. That's it.

(*COL. DODGE goes from R. to C. STAPLETON bursts in the R. front door with the galley-proof in his hand and confronts COL. DODGE.*)

STAPLETON. (*At R.*) Where is that man Dodge?

COL. DODGE. Ah'm Col. Dodge, but ah suppose you want mah son. He's right there. (*Steps back.*)

KENNETH. Hello, Stape!

STAPLETON. Don't "Stape" me! (*Shakes galley-*

proof in KENNETH'S face.) Perhaps you thought these attacks would go unanswered. Well, they won't. Those men are ugly. If you're trying to stop work on that bridge you won't succeed. You'll have to *prove* these things. I suppose you understand *that*?

KENNETH. (*Quite agitated and trying to be brave*) Of course. I understand that. (*Twitches at his collar nervously.*) Why—of course! It will all be settled at the Town Meeting tonight. (*Gulps.*) I'm going to speak or—read a report—about the bridge—if I don't get a sore throat or something from speaking so much. (*Points to window and moves L.*)

(MUSGRAVE, ABBOTT and PERKINS *enter suddenly, right front.*)

MUSGRAVE. (*Crossing to KENNETH at L.*) You've been pretty busy, young man, since I've been gone—haven't you?

KENNETH. (*Standing at c. Stubbornly*) Yes, very!

MUSGRAVE. You won't have to work so hard now that I'm back.

KENNETH. No?

MUSGRAVE. I'll do a little writing myself and try to undo what you've done.

KENNETH. You said you would give me a pretty free hand. I simply went ahead.

MUSGRAVE. I should say you did.

ABBOTT. And he would be going yet if I hadn't sent that telegram.

MUSGRAVE. Yes, but I am in the saddle now and I'll take up these editorials. In the issue of August 25th, you wrote something you should have printed in the funny column—it bristles so with humor. "Unused gas house plant—\$100,000 in interest—

monument of corruption." Did you know that the selectmen ordered that structure built?

PERKINS. (*Near the door, R.*) I didn't vote for it.

ABBOTT. (*R. of C.*) You don't count.

MUSGRAVE. Answer!

KENNETH. I don't care who ordered it!

MUSGRAVE. Then why did you attack it?

KENNETH. It is a monument of corruption! Right on the main street, too. . . . I felt that way that day.

MUSGRAVE. That was on the 25th. How did you feel on the 27th?

KENNETH. Rotten!

MUSGRAVE. You then wrote: "New bridge will continue Main Street to a spot across the river in time— Now valuable new section. Principal owners—" You know that Cal Abbott and I own some property across the river, don't you?

KENNETH. Yes, you own *everything*.

STAPLETON. Here. (*Hands galley proof to MUSGRAVE.*)

MUSGRAVE. Now for this one, that nearly escaped today. "No Thoroughfare?", with a question mark. What do you know about bridges?

KENNETH. Everything. I've seen *real* bridges.

MUSGRAVE. You are familiar with construction and riveting? You examined the bridge before you wrote this article?

KENNETH. Yes.

MUSGRAVE. With experts?

KENNETH. Yes. . . . No. . . . All alone. I walked right out on it.

MUSGRAVE. And found it defective?

KENNETH. I should say so! Why, the Brooklyn Bridge—

MUSGRAVE. That is a suspension bridge—this is a cantilever—

KENNETH. Is it? . . . A bridge is a bridge, and it's got to be built right.

ABBOTT. Musgrave gave him too much leaway, and he's drunk with power.

STAPLETON. See here, are you going to let this editorial of his "No Thoroughfare?" with a question mark, be published today? My men are just waiting the word to stop those presses downstairs.

MUSGRAVE. (*Turns to KENNETH*) Ah!

COL. DODGE. (*Stepping between them*) Look here! Ah know what you are trying to do. Now that mah son has made a success of the paper you want to get it back. You want to stop this issue. Well, ah am a retired editor. Down in mah part of the country an editor sometimes had to sustain his opinions by other means than his pen; but as ah always carried a gun in mah hip pocket and a cow-hide up mah sleeve, I continued to write editorials expressing mah honest convictions till ah sold mah paper and retired from business and that's what mah son is going to do!

(*Enter JOE, right front.*)

JOE. (*Crossing to KENNETH L.*) How did he get that galley proof?

KENNETH. Never mind *how*! He's *got* it!

MUSGRAVE. There will be no issue of the paper today. I've ordered the men to stop work.

JOE. Yes, and I know why. (*To KENNETH*) The men in the press room downstairs have joined the bridge workers in the street. You're in charge here. You want the paper to come out, don't you?

KENNETH. The paper must come out.

MUSGRAVE. What are you butting in for?

JOE. Because I am his friend and believe in what he's done. I know why you want to stop the paper, but you won't succeed.

MUSGRAVE. I *will* stop it!

JOE. Well, you won't stop me. Is the paper all set?

KENNETH. Yes.

JOE. Is it on the presses?

KENNETH. Ready to shoot.

JOE. Good! I'll finish the job. Get out of my way! This isn't the first time I've helped get a paper out. I'll attend to the presses downstairs. (*Takes off coat and goes out back R.*)

COL. DODGE. Ah feel right like ah was in mah old office in Kentucky. Ah haven't forgotten how to run a press. Ah'll help out, too. (*Takes off coat and goes out back R.*)

PERKINS. My boys downstairs will help me guard the door. (*Takes off coat and goes out back R.*)

MUSGRAVE. Stapleton, get your bridge builders to stop those men from running my presses.

STAPLETON. I'm glad you're in charge here.

(MUSGRAVE, ABBOTT and STAPLETON start R.)

KENNETH. (*Taking up pistol and pointing it at them, comes from behind his desk to C.*) Wait a minute. I'm in charge here. Sit down, all of you! You heard how my father fought for *his* rights. I'm going to run this paper *his* way. I was bred in Kentucky, too. I don't know how long it will take to get the paper out, so—(*He hands MUSGRAVE three copies of the Observer.*)—pass those along. And if you get tired you can read *our* editorials. (MUSGRAVE passes the papers. They all take seats as follows: MUSGRAVE about right C. ABBOTT next on his R. at front of AGNES' desk, and STAPLETON back of AGNES' desk.) Or turn to the funny page and have a good laugh, while we all wait. (*Sits leisurely at C. table, pointing the gun.*)

CURTAIN

ACT III

IMPORTANT NOTE: *Before curtain rises on Third Act, all house lights out. Foots on. Wait for audience to be seated. Then lights up again in house. CY PERKINS enters from back of auditorium with COLONEL DODGE, talking together about the meeting with MILDRED MARTIN and MRS. BAGLEY, paying no attention to audience. All take their respective seats down front on right side of theatre facing stage, near steps leading to stage. STAPLETON enters left side of theatre and takes his seat. Lights down again, except on stage.*

There must be steps leading to stage on both right and left sides of auditorium.

The five seats in the auditorium must be reserved for the above members of the cast.

The town clock strikes eight just before the curtain rises.

The platform of the Town Hall facing audience.

The back wall has pictures of Washington and Lincoln, otherwise it is bare in appearance, except for the American flag, not too new, draped on back wall. The side walls run as near as possible to the foot lights. About ten chairs of a cheap sort are on platform. There is a small desk at L., with chair behind for AGNES, facing front. There is a large table in the center of the stage. A tray with glass pitcher of water and glasses, on table L., front corner. Also wooden mallet on table. Back of table, a chair somewhat larger than the others.

DISCOVERED: JOE BAGLEY, *back of table c., addressing audience.* AGNES, *seated at table L., taking notes.* *Applause started by actors in audience as curtain rises.*

JOE. Order, order, order, please. . . . Fellow-townsmen, while these demonstrations are very flattering to me, we must proceed in an orderly fashion. This town meeting has been called to consider thoughtfully the very serious evils under which we have suffered too long.

STAPLETON. (*Rising from seat in audience*) Mr. Chairman, may I say a word or two?

JOE. Mr. Stapleton, the bridge engineer, asks to be heard. (*Hisses from audience started by company seated among them.*) You may come to the platform.

(*STAPLETON ascends to the platform and goes to R. side of table c. JOE sits in large chair back of table c. STAPLETON bows to JOE as Chairman, and then turns to audience.*)

STAPLETON. Ladies and gentlemen of this township, I ask for fair play. (*He is greeted by hisses from the audience.*)

JOE. (*Rises in his place and holds up his hand*) One minute! As temporary chairman, I ask the audience to refrain from any hostile demonstration during Mr. Stapleton's remarks however high feeling may run. (*To STAPLETON*) You may proceed.

STAPLETON. There have been many vicious and uncalled-for attacks in your local paper of late, reflecting on my work and on my character. There have also been attacks upon others who are now absent and cannot defend themselves, but I shall answer these attacks on me—here and now!

JOE. (*Rising in his place*) You may be sure the

attacks upon those who are absent will be repeated in no uncertain terms when they arrive here, which will be shortly.

STAPLETON. (*R. of JOE, walks to and fro while speaking.*) I am not concerned in the attacks upon your Gas Plant, your trolley system, nor your Court of Justice. I am the engineer building the bridge that spans your beautiful river. I am solely concerned with the attacks upon my integrity and the company building the bridge, of which your two leading citizens are president and vice-president. I refer to Mr. Musgrave and Mr. Abbott—— (*Hisses. STAPLETON breaks off at this, waits, then appeals to Chairman.*) I cannot speak if hostile demonstrations of this kind are to occur.

JOE. (*Rising*) Perhaps it would be better for you to omit the names of Mr. Musgrave and Mr. Abbott and permit them on their arrival here to defend themselves and their bridge company. (*Applause from actors in audience.*)

STAPLETON. (*Losing his temper*) I don't believe, after what you have said, that this audience can be fair to me. I will await the arrival of Mr. Musgrave, who will take your place as Chairman and present my case for me. (*Sits, R.*)

PERKINS. (*Rises out of audience*) I'd like to address this meeting.

JOE. Come right to the platform, Mr. Perkins.

(*COL. DODGE from audience calls "platform." The rest of the actors in audience applaud.*)

PERKINS. (*Coming upon stage*) Fellow-townsmen, I have just left the Selectmen's meeting room upstairs, where Kenneth Dodge is being interviewed by Mr. Musgrave and Mr. Abbott. He has stood by his editorials like a man and a politician. **Kenneth Dodge is anxious to appear before you. He**

is anxious to get out of that room, where Musgrave and Abbott are giving him the third degree and trying to break him down. I venture to say that when he does appear before you, he will convince you that he has the interests of this township at heart and will stagger you by the weight of his arguments. He is the foe of evil-doers and the enemy of the corruptions in our midst, with which he is thoroughly familiar. I am here to dare Mr. Musgrave to debate these public questions with him on this platform. Am I in order, Mr. Chairman?

JOE. Indeed you are. I would let you proceed, but I must surrender the chair. (*He points down the aisle*) Mr. Musgrave and Cal Abbott have just entered the hall.

(*Hisses started by COL. DODGE in which the audience always joins. MUSGRAVE and ABBOTT enter from back of auditorium, walk quickly down the aisle to ascend stage on R. side.*)

MUSGRAVE. (*Coming down aisle*) Come right along, Cal. We'll settle this right now—tonight.

ABBOTT. I'm here. Yes, sir!

(*They ascend the platform, put hats on table c. JOE vacates his place and goes to AGNES' desk at L. The others have all risen.*)

MUSGRAVE. (*Very angry*) I'll take charge here. Sit down! (*He pounds with the mallet and they all sit down. Turns to AGNES*) Are you taking notes of this meeting?

JOE. (*Rising*) Yes, Mr. Chairman, under my orders. It has all been quite formal and the meeting very emphatic.

MUSGRAVE. Yes, we heard that from the Committee room upstairs, but there will be a new order

of things now. Agnes, you will erase all the notes you made prior to my coming here and begin now.

PERKINS. Agnes, I am a Selectman and I say you will not erase *any* notes. It's not our fault if Mr. Musgrave was late.

MUSGRAVE. (*Severely*) I'm in the Chair now.

PERKINS. (*Quickly*) You should have been sent there *long ago*.

JOE. Agnes will not erase any notes taken before your arrival, will you, Agnes?

AGNES. I will not. (*Continues taking notes.*)

PERKINS. That's the stuff. I'll make a motion——

MUSGRAVE. (*Interrupting him*) You needn't bother. We'll let it stand. Order, order! Who opened this meeting before I arrived?

JOE. (*Rising quickly*) I did.

MUSGRAVE. By what right, may I ask?

JOE. (*Partly turning to audience*) By the unanimous approval of the towns-people present who filled the hall and wanted no delay.

MUSGRAVE. Well, it's of no moment. I have a very serious charge to make against Kenneth Dodge. I did not present this matter before the Selectmen upstairs, as I deemed it so important that it could only be presented at the Town Meeting here. Cal Abbott, you will please take the floor. (*Sits.*)

ABBOTT. (*Rising*) Mr. Chairman and fellow-townsmen! The crime-wave has hit *this* town now. Three of our most respected citizens were held up this afternoon in the editorial rooms of the leadin' paper of this here county—— (*PERKINS chuckles behind their backs.*) Their lives were threatened at the point of a loaded revolver and if this ain't stopped, the next thing we know, our bank will be held up and the criminal will make his get-a-way in a flyin' automobile—just like New York.

PERKINS. (*Coming to L. of C. table*) I wouldn't say much about that, Cal Abbott, if I was you.

ABBOTT. Are you goin' to stand out now against Law and Order, Cy Perkins?

PERKINS. I am one Selectman that has always stood for law and order in this town, whether I was out-voted or not and I'm going to do that now. We're going to thrash out a few other things at this Town Meetin' tonight besides that little hold-up.

ABBOTT. What? (*He looks about*) That warn't a little hold-up. We were all frightened. You mean to say you don't mind your fellow-townsmen bein' held up? What's comin' next?

PERKINS. Cal Abbott, that gun hadn't been loaded in five years. *Three men will testify to that.* You see it warn't a real hold-up. But some people are so easy to scare.

MUSGRAVE. The gun wasn't loaded?

PERKINS. (*Chuckles*) Why, no! Kenneth was just showing you, playful-like, a present from his father.

ABBOTT. Well, it didn't look playful to me. And we sat there all that time and that gun warn't loaded?

MUSGRAVE. (*To AGNES*) You needn't take any notes of this.

PERKINS. You take down every word, Agnes. We want a record of this to go in the paper tomorrow.

ABBOTT. I wish I'd have know it warn't loaded.

MUSGRAVE. Oh, never mind, Cal. We *didn't* know.

ABBOTT. No. You can't tell when you're lookin' in the muzzle.

MUSGRAVE. Let that go. There are more important things. We'll get that young man vet on other charges. (*Turns to audience.*) Is Kenneth Dodge in the hall? (*Pause. Silence*) I said, is Kenneth Dodge in the hall? (*No answer.*)

PERKINS. (*Stepping forward*) Where are you, Kenneth?



"ACROSS THE STREET"



MUSGRAVE. For the third and last time—is Kenneth Dodge in the hall?

JOE. (*Rising*) Here comes Mr. Dodge.

(*Applause, started by COL. DODGE. KENNETH enters theatre down aisle R., looking straight ahead with a woe-begone expression on his face; continues on down aisle to near stage, then stops, retreats up aisle a few steps as if frightened, then up steps upon stage R. without changing his expression. Goes to chair L. beside JOE. Stands trying to find some place to put his hat. First tries to hand it to JOE, tries to put it under chair, goes to put it back on his head, goes to hand it to MUSGRAVE, then throws it under the table. MUSGRAVE raps for order.*)

MUSGRAVE. Sit down! (*KENNETH swallows hard; sits.*) We needn't waste any more time. There have been unwarranted reflections in the late issues of The Glendale Observer regarding the bridge building company and the bridge engineer. I demand an explanation of these articles written by one Kenneth Dodge. I demand the proofs of his accusations and, as you have called for his presence here, he will speak now and either vindicate himself or take the consequences. (*Waves his hand to KENNETH and sits behind desk.*)

(*KENNETH struggles to his feet; reaches for a vacant chair and drags it toward table; starts to sit.*)

MUSGRAVE. (*Pounding mallet*) Stand up!

KENNETH. I know! I know! I just want to lean on it. (*He stands up, sees water on table, goes over, pours out drink, drinks it. Starts to speak and cannot.*)

JOE. (*Rising*) May I say a word?

KENNETH. (*With a great willingness to vacate his position, goes toward JOE*) Are you going to speak in my place, Joe?

JOE. No.

KENNETH. (*Disappointed*) Oh!

JOE. (*Steps toward audience*) To many of you this young man is known only by name. (*KENNETH follows in back of JOE, and also follows him in gestures.*) Through his efforts as Associate Editor on our local paper he has acquainted you with some of the festering evils that have fastened on your town. He has stirred your indignation and your pride. You have called this meeting to hear him. You need not for a moment doubt he will submit proofs of every charge he has made. (*Applause. MUSGRAVE and ABBOTT hold a hasty consultation.*) He has been fearless in attacking a power in this community which you have endured too long. It is for you to pronounce judgment when you have heard him through. (*Starts to go back to his chair, bumps into KENNETH.*)

KENNETH. You see—— (*Hesitates, reaches for water again, catches himself, tugs at collar*) It's this way. (*Shifts from one foot to the other. Stops abruptly and speaks to JOE*) You didn't tell them I was unaccustomed to public speaking.

JOE. (*Rises, addresses audience*) I should have stated that young Mr. Dodge disclaims any attempt at oratory. (*Sits.*)

KENNETH. Oratory? I've gone blind, or something.

MUSGRAVE. Oh, go on—if you've anything to say.

KENNETH. I can see a little better now. I'll get started in a minute.

MUSGRAVE. Yes—that's what we're waiting for.

KENNETH. (*Squints at audience, looks panic-*

stricken, turns to JOE) Did you say a thousand people out there, Joe?

JOE. Yes.

KENNETH. (*Gazing wild-eyed at audience*) It looks like a million. I told you, Joe, about General Grant.

ABBOTT. (*In bewilderment*) What's he talking about?

KENNETH. Where was I?

MUSGRAVE. (*Rises*) Somewhere around Vicksburg: but this is the Town Hall and it's up to you.

KENNETH. (*Trying to collect himself*) Yes—yes. . . . (*He takes out handkerchief, wipes his brow, trying to smile.*) Warm, isn't it? (*He gropes for time*) I remember. . . . The bridge. . . . I guess I'm coming to—— (*He recovers somewhat as if his fright were passing.*)

MUSGRAVE. (*Pounding with mallet*) Now!

KENNETH. (*Smiles as if he had come through a faint. Then turns abruptly to MUSGRAVE*) I heard you.

AGNES. (*Rising quickly*) May I speak?

MUSGRAVE. No. We want to hear Dodge.

KENNETH. Do you *want* to speak, Agnes?

AGNES. Yes.

KENNETH. (*Relieved*) Well then, go right ahead. (*Motions to her with his hand.*)

AGNES. This afternoon in our office, that man Harry Stapleton took the galley-proof of the editorial that appeared an hour later in today's issue of the Observer.

STAPLETON. (*Rising*) I did. It concerned me. I had a right to it.

AGNES. I'm sorry and ashamed I was weak enough to let you have it. I'll make up for it now, if I can. He took it, not to defend himself because the article was unfair to him, as he said, but to incite a riot among the bridge workers and the press men

after he promised me he wouldn't use it. *That was to be his answer, but it failed.*

MUSGRAVE. I object!

KENNETH. Objection over-ruled! Go on, Agnes.

AGNES. (*Looking at KENNETH sharply*) We don't know *all* about the editorials yet, but I for one, believe they are true.

MUSGRAVE. (*Rising*) That's enough. Sit down!

AGNES. I haven't finished.

MUSGRAVE. Sit down, I say!

KENNETH. *You sit down!*

AGNES. I just want to tell you I'm speaking the truth. Harry Stapleton hates this town—the people he's standing in with as well as the rest. But Kenneth Dodge is *for* this township *all* the time and wants to build it up. I believe in Kenneth Dodge. I hope he will believe in me, after what I've done.

(*Applause started by COL. DODGE in audience and JOE on platform. KENNETH sits lost in thought.*)

MUSGRAVE. Now, Mr. Dodge, we will hear you if you can *talk*.

(*Seeing that the issue has come KENNETH tries to remember JOE's instructions in Act II. He looks despairingly at JOE, then rises slowly, pulls his coat together, gives a weak little cough which he repeats in a louder way as if it frightened him, then apparently cutting loose, turns suddenly on MUSGRAVE.*)

KENNETH. Look here, you! If you get me *real* mad, you'll find I can talk up here or anywhere else. There's something coming to you tonight and you're going to get it! (*Walks back and forth in anger a moment, then turns to JOE suddenly*) Right, Joe? (*Holds out his hand.*)

JOE. Yes! (*Rises to shake hands, then sits down again.*)

KENNETH. That's better than that cough stuff, eh: (*Receives a nod from JOE, then turns on MUSGRAVE, who sits stunned.*) You've played the tyrant in this town too long. You're going to listen now while I tell them something about you. (*He points to audience—to JOE*) I don't care if there's a million out there now. The Glendale Observer stands today for the many against the few. That's something *new* for this town.

JOE. (*From his seat*) That's right! Go on!

KENNETH. We have a trolley system that runs and every car stops at the Emporium.

JOE. (*Annoyed*) Never mind the *Emporium*, Kenneth.

KENNETH. (*Turning to JOE*) Well, that's important, too. (*To audience*) A new line of silks—special sale tomorrow——

JOE. The *bridge*, Kenneth, the *bridge*!

KENNETH. Oh, all right . . . The bridge . . . Yes. (*To audience*) That bridge is a failure and I'll prove it when I read the report I have in my pocket. (*He searches in various pockets.*) I don't know *which* pocket, but it's in one of them, if I haven't lost it. (*MUSGRAVE, ABBOTT and STAPLETON show disgust and JOE shows alarm.*) But before exposing those rascals I want to say something else. Three months ago we had a paralyzed old trolley system, a court of Justice that had gone to sleep and a sick and dying dry-goods store. Look what we have today. We have——

MUSGRAVE. A bridge!

KENNETH. Not that you can cross. We have a trolley that runs on time—now and then. We have a *real* Court. And an *Emporium*.

JOE. The bridge, Kenneth, the bridge.

KENNETH. I'm coming to that. The trolley stops

at the Emporium regularly now. It only *used* to stop when the power gave out.

ABBOTT. What about the bridge?

KENNETH. The people all get out at the Emporium to buy——

STAPLETON. The bridge——

KENNETH. The bridge? No. We haven't any on hand, but that's my next stop. (*To audience*) Do you think the trolley could cross that bridge? Don't answer. If it tried, the bridge would go down.

JOE. Good!

STAPLETON. (*Rising in anger*) That bridge would hold ten trolleys.

KENNETH. I'd be afraid to cross it in my flivver. So we demand that the bridge shall not be opened until it is made safe. You hear that? (*Applause from audience. KENNETH turns to JOE.*) Not so bad, Joe. (*They shake hands.*)

JOE. Great!

(KENNETH *tries to think of something more to say, but cannot. He sits. MUSGRAVE rises. KENNETH then rises quickly.*)

KENNETH. Wait a minute. (*MUSGRAVE sits.*) There was something else I was going to tell you. (*He thinks hard.*) No, I guess that's all. (*Sits again.*)

JOE. The report, Kenneth! The report!

KENNETH. (*Rises, turns to audience*) Oh, yes. That's what I forgot. The report . . . (*He takes it from his pocket and waves it.*) There it is! Worse than I thought. There is trouble with one of the piers. It's sinking or something. (*Waves the report.*) There it is. The report of experts about the bridge. (*Puts it back in his pocket and turns bewildered to go back to his seat.*)

JOE. Read it, Kenneth, read it!

KENNETH. That's a good idea.

MUSGRAVE. (*Holds a hasty consultation with ABBOTT and STAPLETON, and then points at JOE*) Who's making this speech? Young Dodge or Joe Bagley? (*Turns to KENNETH.*) I believe your report is a bluff because upstairs you didn't seem to know the difference between a Suspension and a Cantilever bridge. I don't believe you wrote those articles, but I'm going to find out.

JOE. (*Rises and goes to MUSGRAVE*) You can't escape that way. The question is, are the articles true? If you expect Kenneth to back down, you don't know your man.

KENNETH. No—no, indeed! Don't expect *me* to back down!

COLONEL DODGE. (*Coming down the aisle*) Mah boy, Kenneth, wrote those articles. He will stand by everyone of them. Speak up, Kenneth!

KENNETH. (*Hesitating and looking at JOE, who nods a vigorous "yes"*) Why—of course I will! (*Takes out the report.*)

MUSGRAVE. You'll keep still! (*Rises and points to COLONEL DODGE and addresses STAPLETON and ABBOTT*) You see that man standing there—a stranger in this community, prodding his son? *There* is the master-mind!

STAPLETON. (*Rises*) I suspected it!

MUSGRAVE. Well, I'll deal with him now. He furnished this report and *he* wrote those articles—not the son. The old editor in harness again, trying his Kentucky methods on this community.

STAPLETON. So that's the game?

ABBOTT. I thought there was somethin' behind all this. Tryin' to undermine this town! You're a fine pair.

PERKINS. I move that Colonel Dodge comes to the platform.

JOE. (*From his place*) Platform—platform!

PERKINS. Platform! Platform!

(COLONEL DODGE *ascends the platform and first addresses MUSGRAVE.*)

COLONEL DODGE. One minute, please. (*He turns to audience.*) Ladies and gentlemen of Glendale, ah must apologize for this intrusion in your local affairs, but ah'm interested, too. Ah'm Colonel Dodge, this boy's father, and you will please excuse me if ah'm fighting mad now. (*He goes back to MUSGRAVE.*) Mah boy will address you, sir, in a minute in language you will not misunderstand. If ah get the full import of your remarks, sir, you are trying to rob mah boy of credit he deserves and of which ah'm mighty proud. Kenneth wrote the editorials that have helped reform this town. (*Turns to KENNETH.*) Now, Kenneth, before these good townspeople who are waiting your answer, you will first read that report and then call this man a short and ugly word.

MUSGRAVE. He won't call any names. He can't even make a speech. All he can do is to make unjustified attacks and *boost* that *joint* called the Emporium.

(KENNETH *is talking wildly to JOE, evidently trying to convince him the truth must be told, with JOE protesting. KENNETH now turns on MUSGRAVE.*)

KENNETH. Did you say *joint*? (*He turns back to JOE.*) This is the last straw. He called the Emporium a joint, Joe. (*He turns to MUSGRAVE.*) You and your followers, Abbott and Stapleton, are a trio of crooks.

MUSGRAVE. (*Rising*) Crooks?

KENNETH. Yes. And your aroused fellow-towns-

men are going to give *you* the third degree you tried on *me* upstairs.

JOE. Good!

KENNETH. (*Turning to audience*) The material in that bridge is—— (*He looks to JOE for the word.*)

JOE. Defective.

KENNETH. Defective. That's it. Only the *best* material was used in the Emporium. (*JOE shows impatience.*) In your bridge the whole construction is rotten and not according to specifications. And *who* passed the specifications? Stapleton, the engineer in charge.

PERKINS. I'd like to address this meetin'.

MUSGRAVE. (*Sits*) You did that once.

PERKINS. Well, twice won't hurt none. (*KENNETH shows relief and sits.* PERKINS *addresses the audience*) Fellow-townsmen, it looks like we're going to have some changes around here soon. Brother Musgrave, you'll be busy settlin' up a lot of little odds and ends before you leave again for Montana— (*He swings back and forth on his heels and toes and faces MUSGRAVE.*) We'll have to have a new bank president, a new president of the trolley line, and a lot of other new presidents. But most of all, we need two new Selectmen right away. (*He turns to audience.*) I move that Musgrave and Abbott resign tonight and that we elect in their places Joe Bagley and Kenneth Dodge.

KENNETH. (*Shaking hands with PERKINS*) I second the motion.

PERKINS. (*To MUSGRAVE*) Will you put the question?

MUSGRAVE. (*Angrily*) No!

PERKINS. Then I'll put it myself. All those in this audience in favor of my motion, please say "aye!" (*JOE, KENNETH, AGNES and COLONEL DODGE on the platform shout "aye" and the audi-*

ence always joins.) Contrary-minded? The "ayes" have it by a *large* majority. You can arrange the formalities later.

MUSGRAVE. You think you are running things all your own way, but I'm still Chairman of this meeting and head of the Selectmen.

KENNETH. Now I'll read the report. (*Steps forward.*)

MUSGRAVE. Who are the engineers that made that report?

KENNETH. (*Opens report, seems bewildered as to who made it; appeals to JOE*) The engineers? (*JOE indicates last page for signatures.*) Taylor and Farrington! (*Triumphantly.*)

JOE. Stapleton knows *their* reputation.

KENNETH. Shall I read it in full?

MUSGRAVE. No!

STAPLETON. No!

KENNETH. They're afraid to hear it, Joe.

STAPLETON. (*Rising*) Don't read it. I give in. The report is right. The bridge *is* defective. The east pier *has* sunk an inch in the last week. The girders will be off their foundations unless the pier is braced within forty-eight hours.

(*They have all risen in consternation on the stage.*)

MUSGRAVE. (*To STAPLETON*) You dog!

KENNETH. We've got 'em, Joe.

JOE. You bet!

KENNETH. (*To MUSGRAVE*) You and your crowd are common grafters. (*To audience*) They bribed the State Commission to turn in a false report about the bridge. You didn't know *that*.

STAPLETON. They bribed me, but I'm willing to turn State's evidence. (*To MUSGRAVE*) You said you'd protect me, but I see you can't do it.

KENNETH. They can't protect themselves this

time. We know you. You're just weak. They used you. You were honest and successful till you met them.

JOE. Can you remedy the wreck you've made of the bridge?

STAPLETON. I think I can.

KENNETH. And you'll testify against these men?

STAPLETON. Yes. I'll be here when you need me.

(*Goes out R. JOE and KENNETH shake hands again.*)

MUSGRAVE. I'll not stand for this.

KENNETH. You're out of order. The Town Meeting's running things now and it looks like they're going to be run right.

JOE. Yes!

COLONEL DODGE. (*Taking out check*) Ah have a certified check for the Glendale Observer.

MUSGRAVE. Give it to me. (*He takes it.*) Come, Cal.

ABBOTT. (*Taking his hat*) We've been railroaded.

MUSGRAVE. I'm not through with this town yet.

KENNETH. Well, they're through with you. You're a menace to this community. You held this town in awe a long time, but your end has come. Go down that aisle and out, the way you came. The Sheriff of this county is waiting for you at the door.

(*MUSGRAVE and ABBOTT go down the steps R., and down the aisle. Those on the stage cheer. As they pass out MUSGRAVE and ABBOTT shake their fists in defiance of the audience, to which the audience a'ways responds. During this commotion, KENNETH and JOE take COLONEL DODGE aside and have a heated conversation, evidently telling him the truth about their having changed places. As the noise dies down on MUSGRAVE'S and ABBOTT'S exeunt, COLONEL DODGE steps forward.*)

COLONEL DODGE. (*To KENNETH and JOE*) You mean to tell me that when I thought I had an option on a newspaper, it was only an option on a dry-goods store?

KENNETH. That's it, Dad. We were crossed wires and we uncrossed ourselves. Joe is the real editor.

JOE. And he's the merchant-prince!

(*MRS. BAGLEY and MILDRED rush up steps to L. of stage.*)

MRS. BAGLEY. My Joe!

MILDRED. Joe! (*They congratulate him.*)

COLONEL DODGE. (*Taking the hands of KENNETH and JOE as he stands between them c., a smile creeping over his face*) Well, you two won out. Kenneth, how soon will you want the rest of the block for *our* Emporium?

KENNETH. (*In joy*) Dad's with us, Joe. Now we can laugh out like regular fellows. Ha! Ha! (*To COLONEL DODGE*) Have you got another certified check, Dad?

COLONEL DODGE. (*Turning away, laughing*) You all are too fast for me.

KENNETH. (*Steps forward and addresses audience*) I want to make a little announcement that was too late for today's paper. The engagement of charming Miss Agnes Ellery to your new Selectman—myself! The Emporium will be open as usual tomorrow.

(*COLONEL DODGE goes to MRS. BAGLEY and PERKINS, R., JOE goes to MILDRED, L., and KENNETH and AGNES embrace at c., as the curtain falls.*)

THE END

PROPERTY PLOT

ACT I

Two palm leaf fans on counter, R., near front.
One cash drawer in R. counter near front that rings when opened.
One old folding ladder, five feet high.
A telephone on back end of counter, L., referred to in Act II.
Draped silks on end of counter, L., front stage, of three bright and distinct colors which Kenneth refers to as "a flag."
Pair of women's gray gloves in box under counter L.
Pair of Boston garters on top of shelves R.
Box of men's ties on shelves L. marked "belts."
Box of men's belts on shelves L. marked "ties."
A one dollar bill for Kenneth to give Joe for garters.
Fifty-cent piece for Joe to give Kenneth for change.
A dollar bill for Stapleton to give Mildred for belt.
One check for Musgrave to give Stapleton.
One contract for Musgrave to have Stapleton sign.
One fountain pen for Musgrave to give Stapleton to use.
Option in form of a contract, for Kenneth's use.
Five dollar bill for Perkins to hand Joe.

ACT II

Typewriter for Agnes.
Red rose used by Agnes.
Telephone with long cord on Kenneth's desk L.

Several newspapers marked "Glendale Observer."
Three signs Kenneth uses to hang on tables: one marked "Advertising Department," another marked "Complaint Department," and the third marked "Lost and Found Department," all printed large enough to be read by audience and on stiff cardboard neatly printed.

Subpoena.

Galley-proof sheet.

Sheets of typing paper on Agnes's desk, R., also pencils and note-books for her use.

Tacks in each of the three tables back stage.

Sign for Joe's use marked "Town Hall. Meeting tonight. Kenneth Dodge to speak."

Pencils and pads for Kenneth's use on his desk L.

Suitcase used by Colonel Dodge.

Pistol and Kenneth's editorials cut by him from papers, in suitcase.

Hammer and tacks.

ACT III

Mallet.

Glass pitcher of water and glasses.

Check for Colonel Dodge.

Bridge report for Kenneth.

Pad and pencil for Agnes's desk L.

COSTUMES

The costumes are all modern, as would be worn in summer time. Kenneth well-dressed always.
Act II, white shirt and white flannel trousers.

Joe: Less stylish, but attractive.

Musgrave: Business suits.

Perkins: Act I, Palm Beach suit. Act II, coat and no vest. Act III, in small-town dignity for the town meeting.

ACROSS THE STREET

III

Abbott: Less neat than Perkins.

Stapleton: Act I, flannel shirt, tie, leggins. Act II, same with coat. Act III, same as Act II.

Colonel Dodge: Up-to-date and attractive. Stetson hat.

Agnes: Act I, neat and stylish. Act II, dressed for business. Act III, well-dressed for meeting.

Mildred: Neat and rather plain. Act III, somewhat better dressed.

Mrs. Bagley: Neat and plain. Act III, somewhat better dressed.

THE LIGHTING

Act I: A beautiful sunlit day.

Act II: Another sunny day.

Act III: The Town Hall about eight o'clock in the evening. Electrically lighted.

EFFECTS ON CUES

ACT I

Agnes: "To the city."

The Town clock begins to strike eleven, and must finish at Stapleton's: "If you don't mind."

Mildred: "And he's on the corner with a big crowd around him."

Train whistle heard. All through the play the train whistle is quite distant.

Kenneth: "And mine isn't over there."

A slight cheer heard back
L.

ACT II

Kenneth: "That's what I call going some."

Trolley-pole and spool *pass* with noise of motor gong or bell.

Kenneth: "But I write so many things."

Noise of trolley as if from the Square, but not seen. Gong clanging and call off-stage: "Bagley's Emporium."

Kenneth: "Main, sixty-three, please."

Distant train whistle.

Kenneth: "I want to see you about him tonight."

Distant train whistle.

Agnes: "What Signal?"

Distant train whistle.

Kenneth: "As scheduled in early September."

Noise of trolley with bell only.

Kenneth: "And see if we have been issuing bonds."

Trolley seen passing as before.

Joe: "I thought you ought to know."

Noise of trolley only and call off-stage: "Bagley's Emporium."

Joe: "You bet! A great surprise! Come, Mildred."

Cheers, heard off-stage.

Kenneth: "The trolley, yes. And it's running, too."

Noise of trolley with bell only.

Kenneth: "Dad, that's what I've got to do now I've started."

Murmurs and cheers off-stage.

Kenneth: "Go down, Dad, and see what it means, quick."

Murmurs, cheers and voices off-stage, saying: "Down with the Observer!" "Who is Dodge?" "Where is Dodge?" "The bridge is all right."

Stapleton: "Or you'll lose your jobs."

Cries off-stage: "Yes, yes!" "Where is Dodge—Dodge—Dodge?"

Kenneth: "I think it will."

Commotion off-stage fitted with Kenneth's actions and ending as he appears at window.

Kenneth: "Hello, boys."

Crash of glass off-stage.

Kenneth: "It hurts my throat."

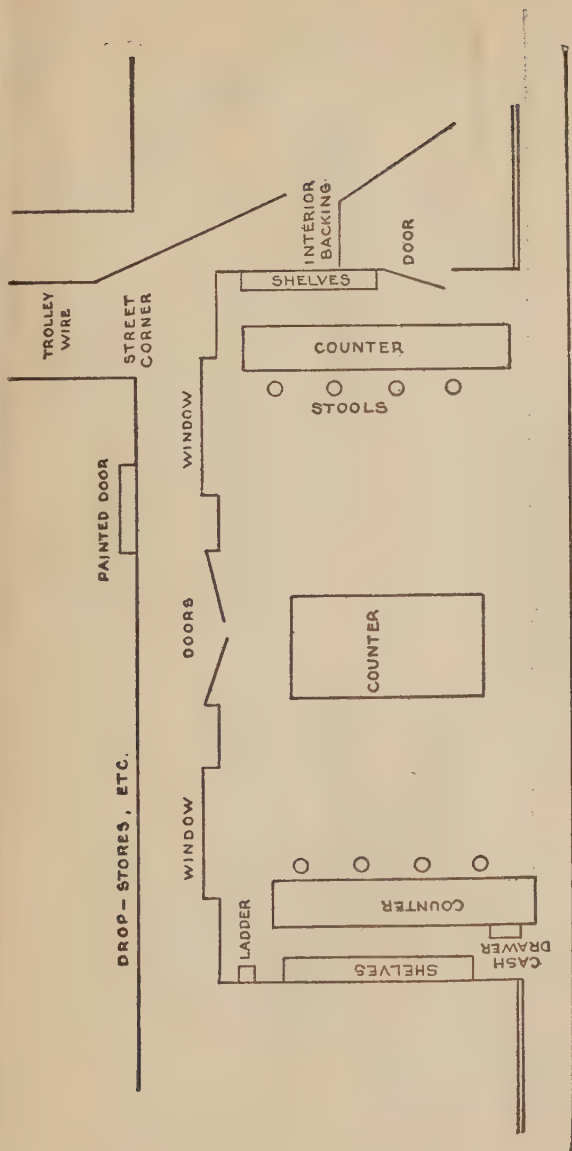
Jeers off-stage.

Kenneth: "Go past the dry-goods Emporium."

A commotion off-stage.

ACT III

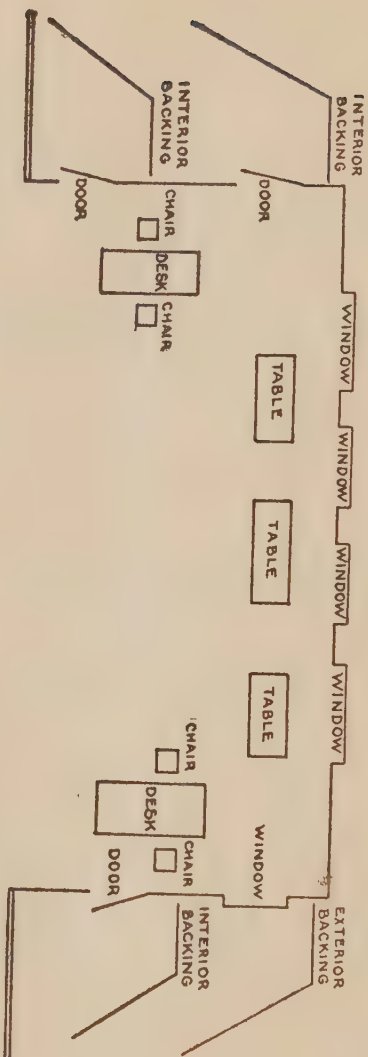
Follow text for hisses and applause led by actors in cast.



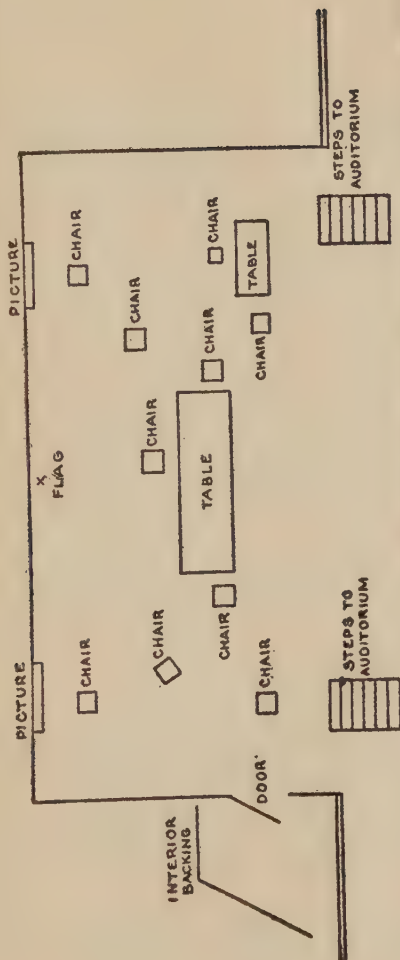
SCENE DESIGN - ACT I
"ACROSS THE STREET"

DROP - SECOND STORY BUILDINGS - TOWN HALL CENTRE

PRACTICAL TROLLEY WIRE



SCENE DESIGN - ACT II
"ACROSS THE STREET"



SCENE DESIGN - ACT III
 "ACROSS THE STREET"

COME OUT OF THE KITCHEN

A charming comedy in 3 acts. Adapted by A. E. Thomas from the story of the same name by Alice Duer Miller. 6 males, 5 females. 3 interior scenes. Costumes, modern. Plays 2½ hours.

The story of "Come Out of the Kitchen" is written around a Virginia family of the old aristocracy, by the name of Daingerfield, who, finding themselves temporarily embarrassed, decide to rent their magnificent home to a rich Yankee. One of the conditions of the lease by the well-to-do New Englander stipulates that a competent staff of white servants should be engaged for his sojourn at the stately home. This servant question presents practically insurmountable difficulties, and one of the daughters of the family conceives the mad-cap idea that she, her sister and their two brothers shall act as the domestic staff for the wealthy Yankee. Olivia Daingerfield, who is the ringleader in the merry scheme, adopts the cognomen of Jane Allen, and elects to preside over the destinies of the kitchen. Her sister, Elizabeth, is appointed housemaid. Her elder brother, Paul, is the butler, and Charley, the youngest of the group, is appointed to the position of bootboy. When Burton Crane arrives from the North, accompanied by Mrs. Faulkner, her daughter, and Crane's attorney, Tucker, they find the staff of servants to possess so many methods of behavior out of the ordinary that amusing complications begin to arise immediately. Olivia's charm and beauty impress Crane above everything else, and the merry story continues through a maze of delightful incidents until the real identity of the heroine is finally disclosed. But not until Crane has professed his love for his charming cook, and the play ends with the brightest prospects of happiness for these two young people. "Come Out of the Kitchen," with Ruth Chatterton in the leading rôle, made a notable success on its production by Henry Miller at the Cohan Theatre, New York. It was also a great success at the Strand Theatre, London. A most ingenious and entertaining comedy, and we strongly recommend it for amateur production. (Royalty, twenty-five dollars.)

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GOING SOME

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Described by the authors as the "chronicle of a certain lot of college men and girls, with a tragic strain of phonograph and cowboys." A rellicking good story, full of action, atmosphere, comedy and drama, redolent of the adventurous spirit of youth. (Royalty, twenty-five dollars.)

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The story has to do with the experiences of an orphan girl who is thrust, unwelcome, into the home of a maiden aunt. In spite of the tribulations that beset her life she manages to find something to be glad about, and brings light into sunless lives. Finally, Pollyanna straightens out the love affairs of her elders, and last, but not least, finds happiness for herself in the heart of Jimmy. "Pollyanna" is a glad play and one which is bound to give one a better appreciation of people and the world. It reflects the humor, tenderness and humanity that gave the story such wonderful popularity among young and old.

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THE CHARM SCHOOL

A comedy in 3 acts. By Alice Duer Miller and Robert Milton. 6 males, 10 females (may be played by 5 males and 8 females). Any number of school girls may be used in the ensembles. Scenes, 2 interiors. Modern costumes. Plays 2½ hours.

The story of "The Charm School" is familiar to Mrs. Miller's readers. It relates the adventures of a handsome young automobile salesman, scarcely out of his 'teens, who, upon inheriting a girls' boarding-school from a maiden aunt, insists on running it himself, according to his own ideas, chief of which is, by the way, that the dominant feature in the education of the young girls of to-day should be CHARM. The situations that arise are teeming with humor—clean, wholesome humor. In the end the young man gives up the school, and promises to wait until the most precocious of his pupils reaches a marriageable age. The play has the freshness of youth, the inspiration of an extravagant but novel idea, the charm of originality, and the promise of wholesome, sanely amusing, pleasant entertainment. We strongly recommend it for high school production. It was first produced at the Bijou Theatre, New York, then toured the country. Two companies are now playing it in England. (Royalty, twenty-five dollars.) Price, 75 Cents.

SAMUEL FRENCH, 25 West 45th Street, New York City
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ON THE HIRING LINE

Comedy in 3 acts, by Harvey O'Higgins and Harriet Ford. 5 males, 4 females. Interior throughout. Costumes, modern. Plays 2½ hours.

Sherman Fessenden, unable to induce servants to remain for any reasonable length of time at his home, hits upon the novel expedient of engaging detectives to serve as domestics.

His second wife, an actress, weary of the country and longing for Broadway, has succeeded in discouraging every other cook and butler against remaining long at the house, believing that by so doing she will win her husband to her theory that country life is dead. So she is deeply disappointed when she finds she cannot discourage the new servants.

The sleuths, believing they had been called to report on the actions of those living with the Fessendens, proceeded to warn Mr. Fessenden that his wife has been receiving love-notes from Steve Mark, an actor friend, and that his daughter has been planning to elope with a thief.

One sleuth causes an uproar in the house, making a mess of the situations he has witnessed. Mr. Fessenden, however, has learned a lesson and is quite willing to leave the servant problem to his wife thereafter. (Royalty, twenty-five dollars.)

Price, 75 Cents.

A FULL HOUSE

A farcical comedy in 3 acts. By Fred Jackson. 7 males, 7 females. One interior scene. Modern costumes. Time, 2½ hours.

Imagine a reckless and wealthy youth who writes ardent love letters to a designing chorus girl, an attorney brother-in-law who steals the letters and then gets his hand-bag mixed up with the grip of a burglar who has just stolen a valuable necklace from the mother of the indiscreet youth, and the efforts of the crook to recover his plunder, as incidents in the story of a play in which the swiftness of the action never halts for an instant. Not only are the situations screamingly funny but the lines themselves hold a fund of humor at all times. This newest and cleverest of all farces was written by Fred Jackson, the well-known short-story writer, and is backed up by the prestige of an impressive New York success and the promise of unlimited fun presented in the most attractive form. A cleaner, cleverer farce has not been seen for many a long day. "A Full House" is a house full of laughs. (Royalty, twenty-five dollars.)

Price, 75 Cents.

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